

*He reveals deep and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness; and light dwells with Him.*

~ Daniel 2:22

As the days grow shorter, we look forward to the light. Daniel lived in a world where it was very dark when the sun set. He also lived far from home, in exile in Babylon. This year, our family has had the joy of my father's move from his hometown to be here, a privilege for us.

After having filmed chapel services for the past two and a half years due to the pandemic, I was elated to return to in-person morning chapel services with the children of our church preschool, Eli's Place, this fall. On my first chapel back in the sanctuary, I asked the children, "What is the beginning part of the Bible called?" I was hoping a child would answer, "The Old Testament." To my surprise, a child answered, "The title page!" I thought the child's answer was unforgettable.

Daniel did not get the answers he expected, either. But he got something better—Daniel got God's presence with him and with his friends. Just think of that fourth figure walking around inside the fiery furnace, or the angel of the Lord who closed the ferocious roaring mouths of the lions in their den. Daniel lived long before Christ came as a baby, but Daniel still looked for the Light.

This Advent and always, we hope to be the light for our neighbors in need. We don't know deep and hidden things, nor do we know what is in the darkness, but His light has come into a dark world, and we will never be the same.

*Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Your Light of Your Son, Jesus, to reveal deep and hidden things to us, Your children.  
In His name, Amen.*

Rev. Nelle Bordeaux  
Outreach & New Member Pastor



*O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord,  
all the earth.*

~ Psalm 96:1

The Psalms are truly songs of joy! In Psalm 96, we read "Sing to the Lord a new song and declare His glory to all nations!"

Carolyn and I are lovers of music and being a part of our Wesley choir is a blessing that we thank God for each day of our lives. As an active member for many years, one of us, Carolyn (the singer) has enjoyed not only the many Godly presentations of Sunday morning services, but many special concerts over the years. Musical works such as Handel's Messiah, Johann Sebastian Bach's Mass in B Minor, and R. Vaughan Williams's Dona Nobis Pacem that our Wesley Choir performed in recent years, bring back many joyous memories. Don (the silent singer) watches over the choir's practices (one chair off to the side of the choir room) and handles the "gofer" role.

What does this music mean to us? Everything!! Around our house, music is at the top of the program! It's not just the songs that Alexa provides, but Carolyn's practice of combining the piano and singing that has energized this household in the last fifteen months (since the Roth/Riddle team got together in marriage in August, 2021.)

What does music mean to you? The first sounds a child hears are the rhythms of the mother's heart. At birth, this child breathes deep and cries loud. To the child, all things are musical, and as we grow older, music often helps us return to that childlike fascination. To hear our Wesley Children's Choir and know they are learning about God through music is truly a blessing.

Soon it will be the season of Christmas carols. Our Children's choir will present the Nativity story through song, sounding like Heaven's angels. From the Roth/Riddle family to yours, let's lift our voices together and praise God through the beautiful songs of this Holy season.

*Dear Heavenly Father, We praise you with our voices through words and music. Let your Light shine on all of us to lead us through our earthly travels, so that we might reflect your goodness. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Don Riddle



***For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.***

***~ 2 Corinthians 4:6***

When I was young, my Daddy would get the newspaper, then my sister and I would walk with him to the beach to watch the sun rise. In his creation God gave us the sun and the moon to light our way. Another great light sent by God was the night Jesus was born. So bright it startled the shepherds who were the first to see the newborn child.

At Christmas we love to see all the lights but it is Jesus who is the light of the world. It is Jesus who shines in our hearts. Glory to God in the highest and may others see the light of Jesus in us.

Nancy Barnwell



***I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but have the light of life.***

***~ John 8:12***

Autumn in Savannah is beautiful with the average high temperature of 78 and low humidity. This year's fall has been particularly nice. We had a few cool mornings, but by noon it was sunny and 80. But, those perfect days don't last forever. This Monday morning was proof in a big way. It was cool, overcast, misty, and downright depressing. My brain mirrored the outside – foggy. There was not a peep of light anywhere – just gray skies.

I said my daily commute prayers squinting through the fog and listening to windshield wipers. I thanked God for my blessings as I always do, but it felt flat. I finished the prayer but didn't have a good feeling like I usually do. My prayer was as dull and not heart-felt. A very guilty, ashamed feeling came over me that I couldn't shake.

Of course, I blamed it on the weather, but I knew in my heart that was an excuse. It's not our external conditions that count, it's what's inside that's important. I want God's light to shine through me so that I can be a light for others who may need a reminder of God's love. Rather than focusing on the gloominess of the day, I began to concentrate on my blessings. The weather didn't change, but my heart did. I felt warm sunshine as I recalled the family gathering from the weekend, the laughter, love, and memories. How could I feel down when I have so much to be thankful for?

God's light is with us on even the darkest day. Although the sky was still gray and gloomy, I decided to walk at lunch. I said my prayer again, but this time with a joyful heart. I heard the church bell ring. It's a beautiful autumn day in Savannah with God's radiant light shining brightly.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for being with us every day, but especially on the dark days when at times it's difficult to know you are there. Shine your brilliant light through me so that others can see and feel your love on their dark days, too. Amen.*

Rhonda Radcliff



***“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord,  
“plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to  
give you hope and a future.”***

*~ Jeremiah 29:11*

***<sup>5</sup>Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on  
your own understanding; <sup>6</sup>in all your ways acknowledge  
him, and he will make your paths straight.***

*~ Proverbs 3:5-6*

As a wife and mom in a busy world, one thing I can relate with most people on is the struggle to maintain control. We all strive to control our lives, from our schedules to the outcomes of our decisions. We plan and research and ruminate on most of those decisions, then question whether we made the right decisions or not. Often, the more we try to control the less in-control we actually feel. Self-doubt and anxiety set in and now we're overthinking. Letting go of the drive to maintain control feels counter to our best intentions, so we buckle down and try to get a grip on our lives.

The Christmas season, with all the busyness it can bring, also provides a great opportunity to reflect on the beautifully simplistic message of our faith. During Advent two aspects of faith we focus on are Peace and Hope. With faith in Jesus, we can (should?) relinquish control and trust in His plan for us. The passage from Jeremiah 29:11 says it very explicitly – He made the plan, and He is taking care of us. We are not, in fact, in control at all. As hard as it feels to let go of the desire to control, there is no more effective way to find peace. Proverbs 3:5-6 is also clear – trust the Lord and He will lead you. He is in control and we are in good hands. Placing trust and faith in Him brings peace and hope for the future. Finding peace and hope helps us gain a clarity that we can take back to our busy lives and let go of the urge to maintain control. Hopefully. Merry Christmas!

*Dear Lord, Thank you for the gift of Your plan.  
Please guide me to find and experience Peace and  
Hope. In Your name, Amen.*

Laura Blake



***You are my lamp, O Lord; the Lord turns my  
darkness into light.***

*~ 2 Samuel 2:29*

Music has been my love and avocation for almost all of my life. I grew up in a home where music was loved and played constantly. I started singing in choirs when I was 14 and have continued until this day. I am now 86. A lot of my favorite music was from well-known hymns that gave me a lot of my spiritual education as well as the pleasure of singing them. That has continued to this very day.

When I think of Jesus Christ being the “light of the world,” I immediately think of a hymn written by Kathleen Thomerson in 1966. This Hymn was not just another contemporary one written mostly for youth to sing and play. The words of the hymn are a solid spiritual truth. If you wish to look up the hymn, it is found on page 206 of our church hymnal. How blessed we are to learn that Jesus is truly the “light of the world.” He has set the stars in place and is the “star of my life.” Reading ahead, it states “In him there is no darkness at all. The day and the night are both alike.” How uplifting and comforting it is to realize that “the Lamb is the light of the world and the city of God.” I pray that God will truly “shine in my heart” at the advent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and “turn my darkness into light!”

*Thank you Lord for the brightness of the light of your life.  
You turn our darkness into day. Amen.*

Keith Ellis



***Then Jesus again spoke to them saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."  
~ John 8:12***

Years ago the youth leader Pat McGlone highlighted a story in the youth newsletter about driving his toddler daughter around to look at the Christmas lights. She would see them and exclaim "oooo pretty!" On the way home after spending a lot of time viewing the elaborate houses, he again hears "oooo pretty" from the back seat while sitting at a stop light. There were no Christmas lights anywhere around them and he couldn't figure out why she was saying this. After looking at where she was pointing, it occurred to him that she was pointing to the stoplights! How amazing was it for this small child to see the beauty where many don't see anything at all.

This story has stayed with me all these years and I think of it often. How many times have we missed seeing the beauty in something ordinary, perhaps something that sometimes annoys us? We can get wrapped up in the hustle and bustle of the busy holiday season and if we are not careful, we can miss the beauty of what this season is all about. Jesus came to us to be the Light. He wants to shine in your life through the darkness and in all seasons. While it may be easy to think of Jesus being the Light of the world when looking at the elaborate decorations, I hope that you think of Him when you see the stop lights too.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for being the Light of the world.  
Thank you for reminding me to take in all the beauty of the season and to think of you in all places. Remind me to see the beauty in the stoplights. Amen.*

Jennifer Baker



***You, Lord, are my lamp;  
the Lord turns my darkness into light.  
~ 2 Samuel 22:29***

I love to decorate with lamps whether it be the one in our kitchen to leave on all night and provide light to the downstairs part of our house or accent lamps in the house to make a room feel cozier. When my girls were decorating their college rooms, we added lamps to not only give needed light but to also give them a feeling of home. It is just a little light in the darkness that brings comfort to a room.

The Lord is that lamp for our lives. For it is the Lord that provides the light to lead us from our darkness. It is His lamp bringing us comfort even in our darkest days if we will just follow him and let His light shine in our lives.

When days are dark, as they will certainly be for each of us, we need to let God be our lamp. This passage came from David in one of the darkest periods of his life. With walls of darkness surrounding him, he claimed God to be his lamp. Whatever we may confront on our darkest days, may each of us turn to God's lamp to light our way just as David did in his darkness.

Darkness cannot exist when God is present in our lives, because He truly illumines our darkness. Health issues may come, death of loved ones may come, unkindness toward us may come, worldly troubles may come, friends and family may disappoint, and sadness may enter, but God remains as our light.

Let us all accept his lamp of guidance, comfort and light. Whatever we may face on our darkest days, may each of us turn to God's lamp to light our way.

*Dear God, may we each have your guiding lamp in our lives. For when darkness comes to each of us, may we turn to you as the light in our darkness. We thank you for lighting our way, turning our darkness into light, and being our lamp. AMEN.*

Susan Hancock



***But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels  
for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor  
because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God He  
might taste death for everyone.***

*~ Hebrews 2:9*

I have chaperoned many a youth trip. At some point on each of these trips, the youth are treated to a surprising fact about myself. I like Christian rap music. It stems from my days as a summer camp counselor. So every youth trip, I turn the playlist on and wait for the reaction. In his song, "Joyful Noise," the artist Flame says,

*"Of all things, the throne know it's more than a chair  
But after our redemption yes He did take a chair  
Greater than the angels' name superior to theirs  
This is Hebrews Chapter 1 if you cared"*

The main theme of Hebrews is the supremacy of Christ. Hebrews 1 is His superiority over the angels. It reminds us that Christ is the Son of God and He is worshiped by the angels. In Chapter 2, the writer of Hebrews proceeds to explain that Christ is also fully human. He chose to make Himself lower than the angels and come to Earth as a man and dwell among us. This fact is crucial to our salvation. Christ lived a sinless life here on earth and offered Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. Hebrews tells us that Christ's sacrifice was once and for all time.

During Advent we celebrate the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ! Paul writes in 2 Corinthians, "God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." His coming, life, death, and resurrection makes our salvation possible. Then, Hebrews 10 tells us He sits down at the right hand of God, and the Lord proclaims, "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." It is because of his death on the cross that He is now crowned in glory. Let us rejoice and join the angels in worshipping the long-awaited Messiah!

*Dear Lord, Thank you for sending your Son to be the sacrifice  
for our sins. We give you thanks and rejoice that in forgiving our  
sins, you provided a way for our salvation.*

*And so, with your people on earth and all the company of  
heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:  
Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, and earth are  
full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Amen*

Sheila Watts



***God is light and in Him, there is no darkness at all.  
~ 1 John 1:5***

It was 1945. I was 7. We were returning from my grandparents home on a rural Kentucky road, where there may have been 2 cars traveling a day. My Uncle Carl, my Mom and I were on our way home to Louisville. Suddenly, without warning, the headlights on the car went out. It was black, and no sign of a moon. The curve ahead in the road was a major one and my uncle could not stop fast enough. We turned over in a ditch. I was asleep in the back seat and my uncle had to pull me out of a broken window. It seemed it was the darkest night of all my life. I found out years later that my uncle had been in the invasion of Normandy; and yet he was very worried about us. He quickly said, "We must Pray" and pray we did. After what seemed like hours we saw headlights far down the road. That light in the darkness I will never forget! They stopped and crowded us in their own car and we got help at the next farmhouse miles down the road.

The light of God through Jesus Christ that lives in us dispels the darkness in the world when we believe in him. Darkness will never put it out. Christ truly is the light in the darkness.

Hallelujah!!

*Holy God, thank you for delivering us from darkness  
when we know your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Sue Ellis



SATURDAY  
DECEMBER 17, 2022

TUESDAY  
DECEMBER 6, 2022

***“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. <sup>2</sup>See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you. <sup>3</sup>Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. ~ Isaiah 60:1-3***

As a young girl, I was part of a mission group whose motto came from Isaiah 60:1. “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.” We were taught that this Light was Jesus whose coming we are again preparing to celebrate. We were also taught that as mission-minded Christians, we had a responsibility to share the Light with others.

Two of our grandchildren were early risers as young children. Our granddaughter always awakened with a sunny disposition. Once, while staying with us, she came bounding into our bedroom early one morning singing “If you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands.” And she fully intended that we get up and clap our hands.

Our grandson is always up by six. He developed an early interest in the sun, moon and stars. His early understanding of the setting of the sun was that the sun was going to bed for the night. Most mornings he greets the day by saying “The sun came back.”

Both, while not afraid of the dark, were happy to see the dawn of day. It was cause for rejoicing and reassurance as the light of day returned.

The prophet Isaiah continues his passage by saying that “...darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.”

Those of us who pay any attention to events around us and throughout the world can easily see the darkness that is so heavy upon us. War. Opposing political ideologies. Economic hardships. Crime. Power. We could hope that such situations would just go away, but we know that such dark situations need exposure in the light of day. But even more, this is the darkness of sin that needs the Light of Jesus.

Reassurance is one of the gifts of Light. Just as the sun rises each and every day, the Light of Jesus can be counted on to give us reassurance that all of the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the Light of God made known to us in the birth of Jesus. And that in and of itself is cause for rejoicing. So, “if you are happy and you know it, clap your hands.”

*God of Light, thank you for the joy and reassurance given to us by the coming of Jesus into our lives. Amen.*



Rev. Carolyn Hale Cubbedge

***“I am the light of the world. Whosoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”***

***~ John 8:12***

I have always had a “thing” for flashlights. I have one for most of the rooms in our house and at least one in each of our cars. I especially like the fancy new ones with LED bulbs; those provide even brighter light with less battery drain. They help me to find things I have dropped around the house, and they also help me to read the small print on labels and directions. I even have a flashlight on my smart phone that I use in all those dimly-lit restaurants. (Can you say “age-related macular degeneration?”) Thus, flashlights provide me with illumination and the directional guidance I need in my everyday life.

Indeed, Bible writers also recognized the vital importance of physical light in our lives. If I counted correctly, my “Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible” gives me 269 entries where the word “light” appears in our Bible. (That does not even count variations on the word such as “lighted,” “lighten,” or “lighteth.”)

At least three times in the gospel of John, Jesus refers to Himself as “... the light of the world.” How appropriate! I would like to affirm that Jesus is the only way to access our spiritual direction, our guidance, and our access to God. In modern-day language, He is our flashlight, our compass, and our GPS. I gladly accept and embrace this undeserved gift. Thanks be to God, and may it always be so!

*“Lord, help us to seek You through your Son, the ‘Light of the World’.”*

James Cubbedge



***The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.”~ Luke 1: 30***

A year or so ago I had a stroke; two in fact; eight months apart. Fortunately, I have exceptional physicians who diagnosed the strokes and found the cause. Their conclusions are not important for this devotion, but what their advice to me was and is. The physicians told me that due to the medicine I needed to take, I should not fall or hit my head on something hard causing internal bleeding in my brain. I would die! Quickly! Nothing could be done! For me, a frightening warning.

We need a little fear in our lives to focus our minds and our hearts. Occasionally, a dark night helps us see stars.

Soon after hearing the warning that I should not fall, I fell, backward, headfirst, on to the surface of a paved parking lot. I do not know how long it took to hit the pavement with the back of my head, but it felt like minutes. My brain was experiencing the rush of adrenaline. The rush slowed time down. In the seemingly slow fall, I remembered the warning but experienced a cool calm cloud settling around me and, on hitting the pavement, the flash of light as I gave my life and soul over to God in my expected death. There was no fear, no panic, no pain. The Holy Spirit caught me.

Strange, but, in a way, that is what the Angel did for the young woman, Mary, who was startled by the Angel Gabriel. Time slowed down. The angel said, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.” After the message, Mary had questions and times of doubt, as do we all. But the light of God is there for each of us just as it came in the baby, Jesus, who continues to be in this dark world of fear. Bringing with Him hope and light,

*Almighty God, continue to enlighten us with the light that shines in the deepest darkness. May more of us see, and respond, with thanksgiving for that light we celebrate in this season which brings grace and hope. Let it be so!*

Thomas Noel Cooper



***Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.***

***~ 1 Corinthians 4:5***

On May 21, 2022, we got married! It was the culmination of two years of dating and a six-month engagement. Prior to entering into a relationship, we had just been friends and each hoping that the right person would come along.

We met at Wesley Monumental. Our story is filled with volunteering with church ministries, singing in the Chancel Choir, and the many church events that take place throughout the year. We heard from our respective friends and family that timing is everything and to simply be patient. They were right. It is all in God's timing. And true to form, Skip asked me out on our first date while we were rehearsing for the Chancel Choir's performance of Messiah. “Do you want to go on a date and eat food, and we'll actually call it a date?”

Scripture is full of calls to wait on the Lord. Mordecai tells Esther she became queen “for such a time as this.” Christ tells us to be prepared because we do not know the appointed day or hour. The prophets of the Old Testament tell of the long-awaited Messiah. We sing, “Come thou long expected Jesus” and “O come, o come Emmanuel.”

Advent is a season of waiting and anticipation. As believers, we anticipate and celebrate the promised Messiah's coming. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians the He is the bringer of light. However, Advent is a time for more than just waiting, we prepare our hearts and minds. We take the time to read Scripture, spend time in prayer, and gather for communal worship. We rejoice that those who walk in darkness have seen a great light!

*Dear Lord, Help us to be patient, to wait for your timing in all things. Teach us to prepare our hearts during this season of anticipation for the light and hope that Christ brings. Amen.*

Skip and Sheila Watts



***<sup>9</sup> The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.***

*~ John 1:9-18*

Over the last year I have had the pleasure of finding a new favorite TV Show. Now typically that means something new on Netflix, Apple Plus or Amazon Prime, but with the tagline “Binge Jesus”, The Chosen is a show that chronicles the Story of Jesus and his ministry, and specifically his relationships with his disciples. Their interactions create a new context to the different walks of life that had to come together to not only witness the miracles of Jesus, but to complete the mission of the early church after Jesus’ death and resurrection. In today’s passage from John, the beloved disciple of Jesus describes the world they lived in and how even though Jesus had been on the earth in human form for 30 years, his True Light had not been revealed to the world. “The world did not recognize him.” (John 1:10). The Chosen Season 1 Finale depicts when Jesus reveals himself to the woman at the well. Afterwards Jesus tells his disciples, “It’s been a long time of sowing, and the fields are ripe for harvest” which is from the Gospel of John; “I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for the harvest.” (John 4:35b). Simon Peter immediately realizes what this means, that they are ready to shine the light of Jesus and spread His light for everyone to see. This Advent Season gives us a reminder that Jesus was a bright shining light when he was born and attracted individuals from all walks of life to the stable including Kings from the Far East as well as local Shepherds. May we continue to remember we are all called to continue that light and shine it today, regardless of where we work or where we live.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us your Son as an example to spend time and reach out to people in all walks of life. Thank you for the disciples and their example of faith and trust. We ask you for the courage to embody your true light, so that we may go out into your world and do your will.*

Adam Hess



***<sup>16</sup> But Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. <sup>17</sup> Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”*** ~ Luke 18:16-17

“We are looking for a few more Advent Writers” Rev. Martin announced at Wednesday night dinner. At the back table one VERY enthusiastic boy raised his hand! Honestly, I would have probably written off his overly enthusiastic hand raising to the chocolate brownies for dessert, but I was sitting beside Nelle, and she reminded me that Langston had raised his hand. I went over to his table and introduced myself and asked if he knew what he had volunteered for. The reaction was as expected- a vigorous NO headshake! I tried to explain the advent devotion book in simple terms and showed one from a previous year, and to my surprise, he assuredly said “I can do that!”... and then the boy across the table jumped in and said “I want to do it too!” and then a THIRD, “Me too!” Talk about positive peer pressure! “Can we just do it now?” Langston asked. I was caught off guard and had no idea how to get started, but how can you say no to that? So I asked the boys - tell me how Jesus is like a light?

“Because Jesus is from Heaven and he can do what he wants to” - Merris Baxter

“Because he is the light of the world and ruler of the world” - Langston Jones

“God made earth and he made us and we are his children and he loves us” - Owen Wanager

The answers tumbled out fast and loud, with more passion and excitement than I could transcribe on paper! Wow! These boys look to Jesus not only as a God’s Son who brought hope to the world, but like an awesome Superhero - ready to save us, protect us and love us unconditionally. As adults, sometimes we get bogged down in the theology and the practical and lose some of the awe and adoration of these boys. We forget that Jesus IS our Superhero - he rescues us from sin and darkness and he loves us, no matter what!

*Dear Father - May we look to you with the awe and reverence of little children. Thank you for loving us. Amen.*

Caroline Livingood, Merris Baxter, Langston Jones, Owen Wanager





***God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.***

***~ Genesis 1:4***

How did God know immediately that the light was good and that the darkness was bad? This scripture verse makes us believe that he thought that the darkness was bad and light was good.

Maybe it is just like our own conscience and the thought process of deciding what is bad vs. good. Exactly how do we teach our little ones to make good choices? Everyday, we are presented with all types of choices. How can we be like God and know the difference between the light and darkness in our everyday lives?

Generosity vs. Selflessness

Love vs. Hate

Faith vs. Doubt

Jealousy vs. Trust

Gossip vs. Leading

Prayer vs. Social Media

God knew immediately that the light was good. Let us take His knowledge to help us determine our own decisions between what is good and what is bad in our daily lives. No one is perfect but God will always forgive you of what you do wrong.

*Dear Lord, In a world full of darkness, help guide us to be like the light that you knew was good. Help us to shine brightly and to make the good choices we should live by.*

Cameron and Milly Schmitz



***<sup>1</sup> Sing to the Lord a new song;  
sing to the Lord, all the earth.  
<sup>2</sup> Sing to the Lord, praise his name;  
proclaim his salvation day after day.***

***~ Psalm 96***

As I write this, the Children's Choir has just led worship the past Sunday. There were 61 children in the choir loft singing Hymns and Anthems. It makes my heart glad to hear them singing, and singing so well! Thank you to the parents who make the effort to get these children here for Wednesday rehearsal and then Sunday worship.

This was also two weeks after Pastor Ben's sermon on how music influences the church year and, more importantly, how it affects our lives. As I shared with Pastor Ben, some of the Hymns we sang during that sermon were Hymns I sang to my Mother the night she died. I don't know whether she could hear me, but I hope so. Singing our songs of faith help us navigate through tough times. Even if you don't remember all the words! (There will be some reading this to whom this comment is directed!)

I can not imagine what my life would be without music, and more specifically, the Hymns and Anthems we sing in choir. I know that most of my friends come from the choir and my life would be much less without them. Music allows us to feel emotions and express emotions we would not feel comfortable sharing in spoken word. Music is so powerful. Singing will always keep scripture in our hearts and in our minds. Never underestimate the power music has over us.

*Father, Thank you for the gift of music. Thank you for the children who are sharing that gift with us. Thank you that we can be reminded of your love for us each time we do sing the Hymns and Anthems of our Faith.*

*Amen.*

Ken Rimes



***“The teachers of the Law and the proud religious law-keepers thought to themselves, ‘who is this Man Who speaks as if He is God? Who can forgive sins but God only?’”***

*~Luke 5:21*

Jesus was anything but normal. He lived a countercultural life. He did not follow society’s standards but followed the ways of the Kingdom of God. This is one of the reasons Jesus brought healing and change to the world. He lived a different way. There are multiple Scriptural references as to ways Jesus was different such as feeding 5000 people, not washing His hands before eating, spending time with the poor, teaching children, talking to a Samaritan, and helping a prostitute.

Luke 5:17-26 is a story of Jesus and his followers doing something unconventional. While Jesus is teaching in a home, a group of friends hopes to get their crippled friend close enough to Jesus to be healed. Because the home was crowded, these friends head to the roof, cut a hole, and lower their friend down into the house. Can you image the guts this took? They pushed past all the people, literally destroyed someone’s roof, and expected Jesus to stop his preaching to heal their friend. And it worked!

As I think about my daily life patterns, I wonder if I am spending too much time living the pattern of the world. Do I consider the miracles that Jesus might want to do in my life? Do I even let my mind be open to the possibility that not following the social norms might be the very way Jesus wants to move? Jesus’ life was countercultural, yet I worry about what would happen if I don’t follow the culture.

Jesus does not usually show up when we are staying within our own boundaries and following the rules. It is when we step out and do something different that big things happen. So, why do we keep within the confines of the world’s parameters?

This season I want to challenge you to consider different ways to live your life. What is a passion in your heart that you are afraid to pursue? What is God asking of you that might be unconventional?

Jesus was radical, different, and brought amazing change to the world. The friends of the cripple did something radical and different and saw healing. We cannot expect to live a “normal” life and also experience God. Jesus didn’t, His disciples didn’t, and neither can we.

Whitney Owens



***When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”***

*~ John 8:12*

“Mom, Mom, can we please ride around and look at all the Christmas lights, please, please, please? It’s the way we know Christmas is almost here! This is my favorite time of the year!”

Lights are such a huge part of the Christmas season; on our neighbors’ houses, twinkling on the decorated trees in our living rooms, a bright star sitting at the very top, the light reflected in a child’s eye as they gaze with wonder at the traveling train under the tree, the bright light in the sky that shone so long ago over the land that fateful night, the one that pointed the wise men in the direction of the one true light. The symbolism and likeness of light to the spirit of Christmas is not lost on anyone.

Light

*noun.* 1. the natural agent that stimulates sight and makes things visible

*verb.* 1. to illuminate 2. to ignite; make something start burning

On that first Christmas the star’s light showed the way to the Savior of the world. Who knew? A tiny baby wrapped in cloth in a manger. The light of the star led them all to the light of Christ and, essentially, the light of the first Christmas. Christ Jesus is the light that opens and stimulates our eyes. This makes visible to us the true meaning of love and life. As the light of the world, Jesus illuminated the path to eternal peace and God’s love. He also ignites in us the desire and thirst to get closer and know more deeply the Father and the Son. Christmas is full of light, both tangible light and the one true light of the season, the birthday boy and his candle.

*Dear Lord, I pray that throughout this season, we take this time to determine which light is guiding our path to Christmas. May it be the one that will lead us to the sweet King in the manger. Jesus will be our lamp and light forevermore, the only light we will ever need.*

*Amen.*

Ellen Harper Williams



***You, Lord, keep my lamp burning; my God turns  
my darkness into light. ~ Psalm 18:28***

Sometimes things just happen – out of the blue, with no warning you wake up one day and everything has changed. You feel the darkness surrounding you like a wet blanket. Life as you knew it will never be the same.

But, sometimes those changes are really, really good!! There's probably a new learning curve to master, new skills to perfect, new places to explore and new people to meet. The darkness may fade slowly, but the light is there and you can see it getting ever brighter, day by day!

Late last year our family experienced the darkness when James was unexpectedly diagnosed with dyslexia and dysgraphia. We didn't know what, why, how to navigate this new world, but we set out on the journey together. Tears of frustration flowed. Nights of anxious thoughts and aimless worry and wonder ensued. It was hard!

Then, God did what He always does – he turned our darkness into light as He introduced us to the most amazing network of friends, teachers, administrators and medical workers. Everywhere we have turned in this journey God has provided an angel to meet our needs. James' teacher has a dyslexic child of her own and is an absolute God send! Our lower school administrator has a dyslexic child of her own and is an amazing resource and friend to us! My former tennis partner has been so very helpful and reassuring to me! My client and James' eye doctor has worked countless hours researching and consulting with her colleagues across the country to find solutions that are working! My sister had an assistant teacher who worked for her over 20 years ago who cracked the code of James' super power – his photographic memory!! (Yep, this is the most amazing part of the story!)

It is almost too much for me to think of all the ways God has prepared each of these special people for this moment in our lives. But, I know HE did and will continue to light our world with the angels among us.

*God, How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast  
is the sum of them! Make me a light to others. Amen.*

Whitney Butler



***Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever  
follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have  
the light of life."***

***~ John 8:12***

***But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the  
little children come to me, and do not hinder them,  
for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. "***

***~ Luke 18:16***

One of my great blessings is helping Monica with the Children's Choir. My place on Wednesday evenings is assisting the children to learn the melodies and words of the hymns that Monica has chosen for them to sing. I get to hear their beautiful voices while finding the page, pointing to the words, and singing the songs of our faith quite loudly. Easy-peasy!

Then, when they have learned the hymns, and it is their time to lead our worship service, I get to sit with them in the choir loft. On October 23rd, we had 60-plus children in the choir loft! Quite an incredible sight and quite a glorious sound! I found myself sitting in a teeny-tiny chair, right behind the organ, amidst singing children. When they sang Hymn 206, I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light, I sat with tears in my eyes as they sang,

In him there is no darkness at all.

The night and the day are both alike.

The Lamb is the light of the city of God.

Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.

It was Heaven on earth for me.

*Dear Heavenly Father, Thank you for the children of  
Wesley Monumental who, by their very presence, bless us  
all. And thank you, Father, for your Son Jesus, the light of  
the world. In His name I pray, Amen.*

Carolyn Roth



FRIDAY  
DECEMBER 23, 2022

WEDNESDAY  
NOVEMBER 30, 2022

***And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph,  
and the Babe lying in a manger.***

*~ Luke 2:16*

When our boys were little, I found a small manger scene with fairly realistic plastic characters within a wooden, thatched-roof stable. It was non-breakable with people big enough to recognize and move around as the boys wanted. Years later, the set became a favorite of our 3.5 year old granddaughter as well.

One day after she had been visiting, I noticed that Baby Jesus was missing. Addison had been playing with the manger earlier. I looked for the baby, and even took a long shot and called her mother to have her ask Addison if she remembered what she did with Baby Jesus. Of course she did not, several hours had passed and that memory was long gone for her.

Over the next few days, I would look at the empty manger. If I didn't find Baby Jesus, the entire set was not really worth keeping. Finally, I picked up the manger to move it to another location, no point in having it on display without Baby Jesus. As I tilted the stable to keep the characters from falling out, I noticed something in the "attic" of the stable, a small space below the pitch of the roof, just behind the angel that was wired in place above the scene. It was Baby Jesus! He had been there all along, but was hidden behind the angel.

I thought about the lessons that were taught by this event. First, without Baby Jesus in the manger, there is no reason for Christmas, or a manger scene in which most of the characters were designed to be looking down at Him. Without Him they just looked down, as if they, too, were looking for Him. Second, despite my searching for Him and thinking He was gone, He was there, waiting to be found. Just like He is always there now, patiently waiting to be found. We just have to know where to look, and keep looking, until we find Him.

I don't think I have ever been happier to find a molded piece of plastic! Given its small size (about 3") I decided to glue it to the manger, minimizing the chance that Baby Jesus could be lost forever. We still retell the story about the lost Baby Jesus and I have to explain that I glued Him to the manger because we never, ever want to lose Baby Jesus again.

Susan Lott



***Be still and know that I am God***

*~ Psalm 16:8*

I AM LATE! In fact, this devotion was due 3 days ago. It seems to be the theme of my life. I feel like the rabbit in "Alice in Wonderland." Always checking a watch, always scrambling toward the next work obligation, kids' activity, house responsibility...and the list goes on.

Where does God fall in all this? Well, many times he takes a backseat to my daily hustle. I have great intentions of picking up my devotional book or Bible and then I am tired.

So, especially in this season, how do we slow down? I am learning. I am a slow learner, but I am trying. I listen to Christian radio in my car in between the hectic rush. I pray in odd places and times, the shower, cooking breakfast, as my kids leave for school.

I know for sure God wants us to slow down. He wants us to listen for his still small voice. Yet, constantly we allow the distractions of our world to drown out the stillness of his voice.

The Wise Men followed a slow moving star to the King. The shepherds traveled from pastures. Our journey, despite the fast moving world, must be just as deliberate. So, during this season of Advent, my prayer for each of us is to slow down. Don't allow the hectic world to crowd out the serenity of the manger. Follow the star. Remember God is waiting on us to be still and listen.

*Dear Lord, Thank you for the gift of your Son.  
Help us remember to slow down and pause, to be  
still and listen for the voice of God.*

Amy Green



TUESDAY  
NOVEMBER 29, 2022

SATURDAY  
DECEMBER 24, 2022

*<sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:*

*<sup>23</sup> "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").*

*~ Matthew 1:22-23*

As the Christmas season approaches every year, we become excited to see the colorful lights and decorations. They appear all around us. The most meaningful to me are the candles and crèches representing the child in the manger and the candles giving the effect of the scene at the birth of Jesus.

Scripture reminds us that the bright star guided the shepherds first and then others as the angels sang. They proclaimed this child would be called Immanuel meaning "God with us".

We need to be reminded of what God taught us through His Son, that he would always be with us. This is hard sometimes to remember when our daily news is so often about crime, killings, and other disturbing acts. It sometimes makes us forget God's promises. But we must keep forth in God's promise.

We are endowed with individual gifts and we should count on recognizing that and move forward in His strength to help His world!

Be encouraged by the gifts of the Christmas Spirit of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.

*Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of your son. Help us to be strong in your promise of being our helper as we strive to be an example of his teaching.*

Deanie Bell



*You Lord are my lamp;  
the Lord turns my darkness into light.*

*~ 2 Samuel 22:29*

Jesus is the light of the world, Hallelujah! At Christmas time we enjoy the lights of the season. Lights on the Christmas trees, lights on garland, lights on the city streets, lights in windows, lights to feature outdoor decorations, and candle lights.

Lou and I are the parents of three sons and Christmas was a big holiday season at our house when the boys were growing up. I loved decorating and Christmas decorating was my favorite. The house was heavily decorated and it went up early for a long holiday season. We had Christmas traditions. We baked lots of Christmas cookies. We had lasagna for Christmas Eve dinner. We dressed up and went to Christmas Eve church. We shared the Christmas story with our neighbors after church on Christmas Eve. On Christmas morning Lou had to go downstairs to build a fire in the fireplace before the boys and I could come downstairs. As our sons have grown up, married, and raised families I have seen them carrying on the same traditions. It warms my heart to feel the love and connection we all share. Our family is scattered all over the United States and yet I know every family is celebrating Christmas with many of the same traditions our sons grew up with. This is a light in my world at Christmas.

As we enjoy the Christmas season let us all enjoy all the lights of the season and let the light of the Lord Jesus Christ be our focal light.

*Father God we thank you for the gift of salvation through the birth of your son Jesus Christ. May we always be guided by the light of our Savior.*

Jeanette Cason



CHRISTMAS DAY  
DECEMBER 25, 2022

***“Then the Lord God said, ‘Let there be light’;  
and there was light and the light was good.”***

*~ Genesis 1:3*

***“There will be no more night; they need no light of  
lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light.”***

*~ Revelation 22:5*

In the Bible, everything begins in darkness and chaos and ends in light and peace. Everything in between is a cycle of darkness and light, day and night, sickness and healing, ignorance and knowledge, death and resurrection, despair and hope. The Bible’s story is not just humanity’s story it is the story of each of our lives, a cycle or struggle between darkness and light.

But in the creation story, God spoke light into darkness. Later, that same Word entered the darkness of our world and our hearts and the darkness could not overcome it. When Christ entered the world he brought a light that could not be extinguished and a hope that could not be shaken. He invited us to open our hearts to His light that he could drive out the darkness of our sin and ignorance, our sickness and sadness so we would never walk in darkness again.

Once His light is in us, while darkness like night will inevitably come back to us in the form of loss and grief, pain, fear, and confusion, His light cannot be overcome. Hope will be not be extinguished even in death. No matter how dark it is around us, light will remain within us until we find our way out of the darkness and into His marvelous light. And one day we will reach the place where there will be no more darkness for He will be the light and we will be home.

This Christmas, no matter how dark it is for you, I invite you to open your heart to the inextinguishable light of Christ and never fear the darkness again.

*Lord Jesus, Light of the World, I open my heart to your light,  
drive out the darkness of my sin, sadness, and fear and let  
me walk in the light and hope of your love. Amen.*

Rev. Ben Martin  
Senior Pastor



John Wesley  
Born June 17, 1703  
Sailed for Savannah October 1735  
Returned to England 1738  
Died March 2, 1791



Charles Wesley  
Born December 18, 1708  
Sailed for Savannah October 1735  
Returned to England 1737  
Died March 29, 1788

*Watercolor by Rev. Nelle Bordeaux of the Wesley Window in the sanctuary,  
completed 1895. Savannah was the Wesleys’ only American parish.*

This Advent, we focus on the Light that Christ brings into the darkness of our world. Whether the light of the stars or of a twinkling Christmas Tree, may you be reminded of God’s gift of salvation to us.

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**Merry Christmas!**

