

**Christ Presbyterian Church
Edina, Minnesota
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John Crosby
A Promise to Light the Darkness | Isaiah**

I've been listening to that story for over 60 years and it feels like each year I learn something a little new or different, or I'm reminded by something. Today, of course, it was all about light. And it's natural at Christmas to see the shining star and the Christmas tree lights and to feel like Jesus is the Light of the world, but what does that mean for next Tuesday or a week from Thursday? How is Jesus the Light of the world then? Well, let me start with a riddle.

If I am in a dark, dark cave over here and I have, inside the cave, a candle, a lantern, and a fire, which do I light first? Anybody? Which do I light first? How many of you feel like you've been tricked? This is a riddle. A riddle means that the thing that you light first is the match. The match gets everything else going.

The reason that this is about Christmas is because we've got all kinds of lights in our world, but we need something from the outside to get it going. When we talk about Jesus being the Light of the world, what we mean is that long after the Christmas tree is taken away, Jesus will still shine in our world. To help you understand that though, we need to see what the world might look like from the inside. It's not filled with lights; it's actually quite dark. We're going to make it as dark as we can in here for a while. Let's turn off all the lights. There is a passage in the Old Testament that says, "The people that walked in darkness." Now, when you walk in darkness you stumble a lot; you fall because you don't know where you're going. You're like this painting shown up on the screens. You can see there's a storm going on, you can see there's a huge world, but you don't know where to go next. You need light. And when we come to the birth of the baby Jesus, we come to the manger, and we discover a new light. It's almost as if that storm is replaced by the dawn. When the sun comes up we see the sun and we go, *oh, yeah, of course I believe in the sun*, but then the sun's light starts to change everything else and you say, *I know where I am. I know where I can go*. There was a man named C. S. Lewis and he said, "I believe in Christ the same as I believe in the sun; not only because I see it, but because by its light I see everything else."

When Jesus says, "I am the Light of the world", that means on Christmas day we look in the manger and we see light. Light that shines in the darkness. Light that comes into the world. Light that changes everything. We celebrate that, but like I said, what difference does it make later? If the light goes away, if the light goes off, we're left in the same spot as we were before, but Jesus says, "I AM the Light of the world and I come to be with you." Some of you might ask, "Jesus is the Light of the world", does that mean that Jesus is a light? Well, He's like one of those night lights. How many of you have night lights in your bedrooms or your bathrooms? I do! Absolutely. Afraid of the dark! But

when Jesus comes and says, “I am the Light,” He’s a nightlight that says, “No matter how scared you get, or how alone you feel, I will always be here. I am the Light of the world.” In the same way, when you go out in the middle of your busy day or your busy week, you can get lost or afraid, and you need a different kind of light. The light you need is more like a flashlight. Jesus offers us light that shows us the way to go, guides us in the path when we don’t know which way to turn, and brings us, not always to safety, but He brings us to the place that we’re supposed to be. This year, I am the Light of the world if you don’t know where you’re going.

Sometimes we forget who we are. Either you forget who you are because you do something special and everyone says, *Oh, you’re the best. There’s nobody that’s ever been as good as you*, and you start to think you’re really cool. Or, somebody will say something mean, and somebody else will ignore you, and somebody else will leave you behind, and you feel miserable and alone and you’ll think, *I’m no good, they don’t like me*. That’s when you need to see Jesus as the Light of the world. Jesus knows who you are. It’s like Jesus is the light in the mirror—a mirror that shows you exactly who you are. And when the light of the world, the light of Jesus comes and shines back in your face, you see that Jesus is saying to you, “I love you. I made you. You don’t need to pretend to be anybody else. You’ll never disappoint me so much that I go away, and you’ll never make Me so proud that I’ll ever treat you differently. I love you because I know exactly who you are. I am the Light of the world.”

Now, little kids haven’t had as much experience being far away and out on their own, but sometimes we get busy and we forget who Jesus is or who God is, and we try to run our own lives. We start to have doubts, or maybe we’ve done something wrong and it makes us feel like God wouldn’t like us anymore. That’s maybe when we most need Jesus to be the Light of the world. It’s as if we’ve wandered far from home and all of a sudden there’s a little light that comes on and it shows us how to get home.

Christmas is the story where Jesus says, “I bring light into the world. I am the Light of the world, and if you’re out there lost, or afraid, or hurt, don’t worry! Not only do I come to the world, not only do I bring light to the world, but I will come out to you.” And that’s why we have these big shiny lights, the Christmas trees, and all that kind of stuff, but also, every year at Christmas we light what’s called the Christ Candle. It’s in the middle of the candles we’ve been lighting all this Advent, and when we light this candle, it’s to remind us that the light of the world never goes out. Let’s speak together the way that Jesus taught us.

Leader: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

People: The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.

Leader: In Him is life, and that life is the light of all people.

People: The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness will not overcome it.

Unison: Jesus Christ is the Light of the world. Glory to God in the highest.

We would like to sing one more song. A song that you can sing in the middle of the day and a song that's great at night when everything is quiet and you wonder where Jesus is. This is the reason why we gave all the kids their little lights because we believe that Jesus wants to share His light with us. Would you join us please in singing Silent Night?

We all need a light, don't we? I'm going to say one thing before we do our blessing for Christmas, and that is that as you leave today, we would like to offer each family here a Christmas gift. Some folks in our church have chipped in and bought for each family a copy of a book called *Jesus Outside the Lines*. This is, in fact, a dark time for our world. People over here yell and scream, and don't like the people over there, and the people over there, they don't listen to the people over here, and both of them say, "Well, Jesus is on our side," and Jesus says, "Dude! I'm not on your side. You're supposed to be on My side." So we want to spend some time talking about Jesus getting away from taking sides and going outside the lines. In the weeks leading up to Lent, we're going to have a series of sermons about how we can get past the constant arguing and bickering that we always do. *Jesus Outside the Lines*. We hope that you will join us for it.

Let's start our Christmas blessing small and easy. I will say to you "Merry Christmas" and you will say? "Merry Christmas!" I like the one who said, "And to everyone here!" I think that's great. May God, the Father of love, shower it down upon you this Christmas, may Jesus, who comes into our lives and hearts, give you grace that will let you come home to God, and may the Spirit of peace give you the light of peace from this day forward. Go in peace.

The nature of oral presentations makes them less precise than written materials; any lack of attribution is unintentional, and we wish to credit all those who have contributed to this sermon. Soli Deo Gloria.