

# Sermon Notes



**Series: Waiting for the Light**

**Sermon: Come Darkness, Come Light**

## **Isaiah 9:2-7**

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

---

## **Monday: Read Genesis 1:1-5**

In her recent book *Learning to Walk in the Dark*, Barbara Brown Taylor writes, "The way most people talk about darkness, you would think that it came from a whole different deity, but no. To be human is to live by sunlight and moonlight, with anxiety and delight, admitting limits and transcending them, falling down and rising up. To want a life with only half of these things in it is to want half a life, shutting the other half away where it will not interfere with one's bright fantasies of the way things ought to be." God made everything from the dark. And into all of our lives there are times when the darkness comes. If God created light from darkness, is it possible that we can find some creative power in the darkness of our lives? Think about a dark time in your life, did you learn anything important through it? Did you learn how to move differently? Think differently? Did you find any holiness there?

*Prayer: Creating God, grant me holy wisdom to walk in the darkness. Amen.*

**Tuesday: Read Psalm 139**

Psalm 139 combines praise of and appeal to the God who knows all and who encompasses all. The psalmist admits to God, in effect, "You know where I live," which is to say, God can get at me as God wills, and there is no place to hide. Normally, for us, "I know where you live," is seen as threat, but it is evident that even in the darkness, God can shine a light of hope and seek us out, for darkness is as light to God. Look at the Psalm again and take note of the language that indicates darkness: the womb, secret places, the depths of the earth. In all of these places and more, God is, and God can search us out. Are there times when you would like to hide from God? Times when you doubt God will find any light in you? Is it reassuring to know that there is no place you can go that is too far or too dark for God to find you?

*Prayer: Search me, O God, and know my heart. Amen.*

**Wednesday: Read Isaiah 11:1-10**

It is challenging this time of year when the days are short and there is not enough light. The thing about darkness is that it is hard to see in it. It is hard to tell where you are in relation to other things. It is easy to imagine dangers lurking around the corners. It feels isolating. The darkness of winter signals us to light up our homes, our trees, our fireplaces, in order to bring in the light. The light gives us hope in the darkness. Isaiah sought to give people that kind of hope. He spoke of one who would come to lighten burdens, right the wrongs, restore all things to way they were meant to be--a way that makes it possible for us all to live full lives of joy and purpose. Verse 10 says that the root of Jesse shall be a *signal* to the people. As we enter the season of Advent, we look for a holy signal. A light that will shine into all the dark corners of our world and bring God's justice. But the thing about a signal is that it calls us to something – perhaps to be a part of bringing God's justice into our corner of the world. What does this passage signal to you about how to live? How can your life be a signal of light and hope for others? In what ways are you called to lighten others' burdens?

*Prayer: God of light, may your holy signal move me to offer light and hope to others. Amen.*

**Thursday: Read Matthew 5:13-20**

"You are the light of the world" is a great and holy identity. Jesus leaves no room for doubt that along with this blessing comes responsibility. It's one thing to know and to claim your identity. It's another thing entirely to live it. We have a lot of information about God to share, but too often that's as far as it goes. We tend to gather information for information's sake and not for the sake of the difference it might actually make for another. In this section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reminds us that knowledge about God cannot exist simply as knowledge. It is not enough to know *about* God. As disciples, we are called to be the *activity* of God in the world. We are called to live out our identity as the light of the world. Knowledge without action perpetuates the existence of racism in our world. Knowledge without action contributes to our silence in the face of injustice. Knowledge without ac-

tion continues to oppress the poor, to ostracize the marginalized, to overlook the hungry. Knowledge without action is a basket placed over the light. How can you dedicate yourself to being the light this Advent season? In what new ways can you put your faith into action for God's sake? For the sake of others?

*Prayer: Lord, help my light to shine. Amen.*

**Friday: Read Luke 4:14-21**

This is Luke's first description of Jesus' public ministry. First things matter in the Gospels because they set the tone and name the priorities for what is to come. It's important to Luke for us to know that Jesus comes filled with power and, perhaps even more, it's important to Luke for us to know just what this kind of power looks like. This makes Jesus' choice of reading from the scroll in Isaiah very interesting, because if there's one thing all the people referenced by Isaiah have in common, it's that they are definitely *not* the powerful people in the world. Filled by the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus testifies to the fact that God's power is always seen as peculiar and odd - even uncomfortable - by the world's standards, because it focuses on those the world has overlooked, forgotten, or discarded. He knows that God sees all, loves all, and intends to redeem all. I wonder what change could come to the world if our individual and collective energies were filled by the power of Jesus' mission: bringing good news to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives, bringing renewed vision where darkness has prevailed for far too long, letting the oppressed go free, and releasing from debt those whose redemption never seemed possible. What would it mean to you to embrace Jesus' powerful mission as your own? What would it mean for our congregation? For our community?

*Prayer: May we, filled with the power of the Spirit, take up your mission, O Lord. Amen.*

**Saturday: Read Ephesians 5:8-14**

Ephesians focuses on how faithful people should live in the light of God's grace. The letter, written to a worshipping community, reminds them that they are, in essence, a family (children of the light), and argues that if their parent is light, they should resemble their parent in how they live: exposing what is secretive and false, and showing what is good and just and truthful to the world. To live as children of the light, we are expected to care for one another as family. Not just any family, at that. We are to live in community and act with thanksgiving and praise to Christ, whose resurrection lights the way for all. What do you think it means that "Christ will shine on you?" In what ways does our congregation live as children of the light?

*Prayer: May we, as church family, live as children of the light. Amen.*