

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
Des Moines, WA  
December 24, 2010**

*Is. 9:2,6,7 John 8:12 Mt. 5:14-16*

***Christmas Decorations: Lights***

- 1. The need for light***
- 2. The Light***
- 3. More Christmas lights***

**Hymns: 65 – The First Noel – 47 – Lovely Child,  
Holy Child – 63 – 60**

All Scripture quotations from the NIV

*Isaiah 9:2,6,7 – The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned... For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.*

*The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.*

*John 8:12 – Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

*Matthew 5:14-16 – “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.<sup>5</sup> Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

Who wouldn't like Christmas lights?

- How many children haven't had their face light up when they see that the tree in the house is up, with the lights on.
- It's very common for cities to have a tree lighting ceremony toward the beginning of the holidays.
- I remember when I was a little boy in Portland, OR, that we would drive around a few neighborhoods just looking at the colored Christmas lights that people had put on their houses.
- I've enjoyed putting up Christmas lights on the homes that I've lived in down through the years.
- Perhaps you took a drive or walk through the neighborhood in Redondo that has taken Christmas lights to a new level.
- And tonight in church we have the only worship service of the year where we close it with all of us lighting candles, which is one of the most popular services of the year.

Tonight we continue a short sermon series on Christian Christmas decorations by looking at one of the common decorations that we see this time of year: Christmas lights. **As we look at this in a deeper, spiritual way this evening, we will see:**

- 1. The need for light**
- 2. The Light**
- 3. More Christmas lights**

**1** – Do you remember the first words that someone spoke in the Bible? At the very beginning God said, “*Let there be light.*” Even before there were heavenly bodies created to produce light, God made light! God made this first world a bright,

happy, perfect place. He created everything that would make his crown of creation – man and woman – happy. It truly was a Paradise full of light.

However, then the darkness came. Genesis 3 tells us, *“When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.”* The man and the woman disobeyed against the one command that God had given them and sinned, bringing darkness into the world. This darkness affected them and their world dramatically. It ruined God’s world and brought sorrow and death into the world. For Adam and Eve and all the descendants they would have, we hear the dire words of Genesis 8: *“Every inclination of (man’s) heart is evil from childhood.”*

The effects of darkness have been passed down to us. Jesus said in Mark 7, *“Out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.”* We see it in action in our world around us. Society struggles with the sins of theft, murder, suicide, rape, sexual immorality, hate, drugs, and more. We see crime and sin all around us. The darkness is profound. Even at the joyful time of Christmas we see the darkness around us. Many don’t know that meaning of candles, tree lights, and the house lights.

We also have to point the finger of guilt toward ourselves. We are children of darkness as well. Your life is plagued with anger, harsh words, good intentions not carried out, promises broken or forgotten, disappointment in yourself, shame, and

guilt. Our homes are not exempt from the effects of darkness. How often wouldn’t you be embarrassed if all of us knew the kind of darkness that shrouds your house? The children fighting, the parents arguing, the house in shambles, the Bible hidden, the TV worshipped, the ungratefulness prevalent, and the hate smoldering.

What should terrify us the most about our own condition is that the darkness that we are and that we live in leads only to fear and guilt in life and to death, even eternal death in hell. **We need light!**

**2** – In John 8:12 Jesus made a profound statement. He said, *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”* To appreciate the depth of this statement, we must know the context of it. Jesus said this in Jerusalem during a festival called the Feast of Tabernacles. For an entire week, the people were to live in a tent that father made outside. The reason God commanded his people to celebrate this was to commemorate the way God led his people in the wilderness after they exited Egypt in dramatic fashion and made their way to the Promised Land under Moses’ direction. You might remember that God himself led them in a burning “pillar” that appeared as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire at night. Light was an important part of the feast in Jerusalem. During it they would light a huge candelabra with four lamps that required ladders in order to light it. How fitting that they would celebrate that wilderness direction that God gave them. Without it, they surely would have perished along the way!

At this momentous time of year, the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus said, *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”* Do you see the meaning in his

words? He was proclaiming himself to be the fulfillment of God's picture of light and his guiding his people to the Promised Land.

This had been prophesied in Isaiah 9: *"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned... For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this."*

Jesus was sent by God the Father to be the Light of the world. He was sent to the dark world to save it. He would be arrested, abused, and murdered in our place. Darkness would reign as his enemies plotted to take his life. Yet God the Father would use this event to place the sin of the world on Jesus, so he might pay the price of our salvation on the cross. **The Light of the world won our forgiveness by having his Light extinguished. This victory was proclaimed on bright Easter morning when he was raised from the dead again!**

We rejoice tonight because this Light has been given to you. 2 Corinthians 4:6 says, *"God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."* God shone this light into your heart by your baptism and by your hearing of his Word. He has given you the gift of faith by his Holy Spirit! **Your darkness has been broken, for your sinful heart has been converted. By God's grace, you know about and you believe in the Light of the world, who is your only way to heaven.**

**3** – There is one more fact about Christmas lights that we need to recognize. We see more about Christmas lights in Matthew 5:14-16. There Jesus said to his believers: *"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."* Who else is Christmas lights? You are! Wherever you go you show the true Light by your actions. You live your faith in your words and actions. You emulate the perfect life of your Savior. You let your light shine.

When we look at a Christmas tree, we're reminded of this. Many people have a star at the top of their tree, which led the way to the Savior who was the Light of the world. And then we have the many lights on the tree below. When you look at a tree, you can think of the believers in Jesus, including yourself, who are in the world. You can think of how you are to be bright on the dark background of this sinful world, so that others can see the true Light in you and be attracted to him.

Therefore, we have to ask the question tonight: Are you being the light that God has made you?

- Are you conducting your life in a way that people of the world would look at you and wonder, "Why are you different from regular people?"
- Is your speech free from the regular speech of this world that misuses God's name and gossips about its neighbor?
- Are you truly showing people the way to Jesus Christ?

- Are you different? Or do you fit into the darkness pretty well?

When you look at your life and realize your shortcomings and sins in your lack of light, you need to flee back to the true Light and repent. You need to confess your sins and hear the news that “a Savior has been born to you who is Christ the Lord.” Then you need to rededicate your life to the true Light and to letting your light shine as an example to those around you. You might even be able to think of a relative or friend of yours who is living in darkness right now, who needs your inspiration to see the Light.

Finally, we see that soon in our worship service you will be lighting your candle. When we do this, remember why. Remember the Light that is coming into the world. And remember why you individually are lighting your light. When you see your tree or a beautifully decorated house in your neighborhood, remember why we have lights on it. The true Light is coming. And your light is shining.

May you hang your light out often, figuratively speaking. And as you do, may God cause many to be led to the Savior, the true Light of the world! Amen.