

January 8, 2023 The First Sunday in Epiphany In the Name of Jesus John 1:4 and 8:12

Dear fellow redeemed and believing children of God, who have been called out of darkness into His marvelous light,

An artist painted a picture of a winter evening. The trees were covered heavily with snow. Near the center, but sitting back in the picture was a dark house, dreary, and desolate in the midst of a cold winter snow storm. And then, with a quick stroke of a "00" brush filled with yellow paint, the artist put a light in one window. In an instant the whole dark, cold, and wintry scene became alive with warm comfort and cheer!

So it was, that Thomas Kincaid became known as "**the light painter.**" His work has such great appeal because of the nature of light itself, which chases darkness whenever and wherever it is applied, in whatever medium. But

JESUS CHRIST IS "THE LIGHT OF LIFE"

I.

As light is its own witness, so is Christ. Jesus says: "**I AM THE light of the world,**" but since the Fall into sin, the world actually *hates these words of Christ because it loves the darkness!*

If Jesus had said, "*I am A light in the world,*" the world would rejoice. But Jesus declares that *He is THE Light of the whole world,* and the world **talks back to Him:** "*What a boastful statement! Are you saying that there is darkness wherever **You** are not present? What about the thousands of highly respected philosophers and teachers of religion in the history of this world? – Do You mean to say that without You they do not have the light the world needs? _____*

Well, yes. This is **exactly** what Jesus Christ is saying! He is not boasting about Himself; He's telling the truth! For **He is the light of the world because from the beginning LIFE was IN HIM.** This is what John has already said in the first chapter of his Gospel: "**In Him was life and the life was the light of men.**" (Jn. 1:4) Therefore Jesus also says in chapter 8: "**I AM the light of life.**" *Jesus Christ is His own witness.*

Do you remember how God identified Himself to Moses from the **burning bush?** God said: "**I AM Who I AM.**" Here Jesus says, "**I AM THE Light of life.**" In other words: "**I AM** the LORD God Almighty, the Creator of light in the beginning! Who dares to call the Son of God a liar because He claims to be the only light of the world? Surely we must say with Paul IN Romans 3:4: "**Let God be true, and every man a liar!**"

Jesus Christ calls Himself the "**light of the world,**" because God the Father sent Him to a sin-darkened world to be its only spiritual light of life unto salvation. "**Indeed,**" God says to Christ through the prophet Isaiah: "**I will ALSO give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.**" But how is Christ **given** to both **Jews and non-Jews** as **THE "Light of Life"**? The answer lies in a second quality of light.

II.

As light reveals itself, so Christ reveals Himself in His Word and in His followers. Those in the world and in the churches who think Christ reveals Himself and guides them to God by the "**light**" of their own thoughts and feelings are still in darkness! For Christ says, "**Search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.**" (John 5:39) Psalm 119 says: "**The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple. (130) "Direct my steps by Your word. And let no iniquity rule over me." (133)**

Wherever Christ's light is not found in **His Word**, a person remains in spiritual and eternal darkness no matter how good or intelligent he thinks he is! And the person who refuses to follow Christ's Word because a particular teaching does not agree with his **feelings or human reason**, is rejecting the light of Christ, for the darkness of error which leads away from God!

As light reveals itself, so Christ reveals Himself also in the lives of those who follow His Word. Jesus says that those who "**FOLLOW**" Him "**shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.**" On a night so dark you could not see your hand in front of your face, would you walk **without a flashlight**, and say to yourself, "*God will guide me*"? That would be stupid, right? So also Jesus Christ has provided the ***light of His Word to guide us in this sin-darkened world.*** Psalm 119:105 says: "**Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.**"

Take those Gentile Wise Men from the East, for example. They were **astrologers – professional star gazers**. They probably followed the **star** westward toward the land of the Jews, because they **knew** the prophecy of **Balaam**, recorded by Moses 1500 years earlier. It was not only the star, but **God's Word** that sent them on their way!

When they came to Jerusalem many months after Christ's birth, they were faced with the spiritual **darkness of King Herod** and all his fear, envy, and hatred. They might have turned aside from the path to life in Christ, even as we may turn aside from Christ in the darkness of this world.

But when they heard from the O.T. Book of the Prophet Micah that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, ***they followed THAT light of Christ from His Word.*** And the star appeared again, "**going before them**" until it stood over the place in Bethlehem where the young Child was.

When they came to the house of Christ in Bethlehem, they worshiped Him and gave him the gifts of faith. They did not return to the darkness of Herod and Jerusalem. God **directed** them to take a new and different way home. **Again they followed Christ by following God's Word!**

III.

Finally, the Light of Christ MUST shine against the darkness to bring His Life! When these "Wise Men," returned to the spiritual darkness of their own homes and neighborhoods, they had to make a choice: Should they **hide the light of life in them, or let it shine?** It would have been easier not to upset the darkened hearts of their family and friends with the **light of life in Christ**, even as we ourselves are often tempted to do.

But, if the "Wise Men" continued to be "**followers**" of Christ, the light of His Word must **shine against the darkness around them**. Why do we turn on a light at night when we hear a strange sound in our homes? Because the light reveals whatever might be a danger to us – a chair we may stumble into, broken glass on the floor, or the thief who wants to take what is ours.

Likewise, it is the nature of the spiritual light that it does **not "get along"** with the darkness, but **exposes its dangers!** Jesus and His New Testament apostles tells us to expose the darkness of every error, every false teaching, and not to support it in any way. "For" as Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "**what fellowship has light with darkness?**" (2Cor. 6:14).

Some years ago, a Christian friend I had served in Texas in the early 70's came to Columbia and took my wife and me out to supper. She had been working as an artist under Thomas Kincaid. She had a high regard for her famous boss, the "Light Painter" because his goal was to glorify the Creator of **physical light** in his paintings. "The Light Painter" did this well!

But Christ's **spiritual** Light was never meant to light up a painter's canvas. Christ's Light is meant to expose the darkness of sin and light up the only path to **life** through faith in Jesus Christ. **His Light** is intended to bring **eternal Life** to all who "**follow**" Him in His Word. These are

“the sons or children of God.” These are the **spiritual** paintings of Christ – **THE** “Light Painter.”
YOU are His canvas! But He has not painted His light **ON you**. He has painted **The “light of Life” INTO YOU**, so that as His believing followers you may shine from the **INSIDE** out!

God be praised for the Light and the Life He brings through **the Epiphany** His Son – **“THE Light of the world”!** May it chase away the darkness of our own sinful hearts! May it shine forth from us, so that others may also come to the **Light and Life of Christ forever!** Amen.