

CHRIST, OUR LIGHT
Christ's Powerful Light

John 1:1-14

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AUDIO: <http://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/christ-our-light-christs-powerful-light/>

I've learned our family is not the only one that watches "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation" every year at Christmastime. When Clark Griswold finally plugs in the power, the electric meter just whirrs. And his house lights the entire city! But Christmas lights are relatively new to the holiday celebration. Soon after Thomas Edison invented the light bulb, he strung a few lights together during the 1880 Christmas season and hung them outside his lab in New Jersey. Two years later, his partner Edward Johnson went further. He tied together red, white and blue lights and strung them on his Christmas tree. This Advent theme of light and darkness has been fascinating.

Light has many characteristics. For one thing, light is stubbornly powerful. So the light of Jesus is stubbornly powerful. I love v. 5. Of all the analogies regarding light, none is more helpful than the truth that no amount of darkness can extinguish the light. This is the Christmas and Easter message! Note that the verb tense changes in v. 5. It has been past tense; now it is present tense: "shines," ongoing action. The Jesus light never ceases to shine.

Do you remember Elisey Pronin, our partner pastor from Ukraine who preached here in May? His church in eastern Ukraine had been demolished by the civil war there. He had fled for his life. We heard from him this week. He is now in Lviv, sharing the gospel. He and his band of believers are sharing humanitarian aid and holding Christmas concerts. Every Sunday, they have about 20 visitors. BTW, he said to tell the entire church hello! All the darkness of war could not extinguish the light of Jesus!

Light also exposes or reveals. Verses 10-11 tell the sad side of Christmas. The world rejected Jesus because his light exposed our sins. I once took my car to a body shop, to repaint over a scratch. All seemed fine in the shop, but when I got the car out in natural sunlight, the new paint didn't match. In the light, it wasn't what it seemed in the shop. So our sins are exposed by the light.

But the light of Jesus also exposes or reveals God. Verses 12-14 offer hope. After 400 years of darkness (the time between the last prophet's voice in Israel until the Messiah's birth), now, the light shines! Yes, it shines on our sin (v. 11-12). But it also shows us God. In this light, says John, we meet nothing less than the self-disclosure of God (vv. 1-3). Imagine! God's unveiling, God moving into our neighborhood!

But there's another quality of light. I confess I had never thought of this. I have on my bookshelf an old book, copyright 1950, by F.B. Meyer, a Baptist pastor who lived in the last half of the

19th century [*Gospel of John*]. Light is gentle (p. 22). It travels millions of miles, at an enormous speed, 186,000 miles/second (that's 7.5 times around the earth in one second!). Yet light doesn't arrive with a crash or explosion. When it arrives on a blade of grass, it doesn't even knock off the dew drop! It's gentle. Light doesn't fire off cannons or ring bells or call attention to itself. It just shines. That's the gentle light of Jesus.

Last week, I was driving to a cemetery committal service. In Crocker, MO, I saw a sign which read, "God's people can't carry out the world's darkness, but we can carry in the light." Yes! Let's stop whining about how "they've taken Christ out of Christmas and just make sure he's in it through our lives! This saying isn't in the Bible but probably should be: Don't curse the darkness, light a candle. Be the gentle Jesus light.

Last September, on a beautiful fall evening, Janet and I were at Windermere for a Churchnet board meeting and overnight retreat. Just as we finished the evening session, the power went out all over the campus. We would later learn that a transformer had blown. Total darkness. As I said, it was a gorgeous night. Janet got out her phone app that shows the constellation of stars. How breathtaking! My first thought was, those stars are always there, but I never see them! When the lights finally came back on--are you ready for this?--Janet and I were in our van, charging our phones! I know, sad!

Here's my reflection on that evening. The darkness created a deep sense of helplessness. And when the light finally came, we experienced a deep sense of wonder--at the power and beauty of light.