

## **Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost--Symbols of Christ in Stained Glass: The Light of the World**

**Faith Lutheran Church, Radcliff, KY September 22, 2013**

**Based on John 8:12-20 written by Vicar Ben Zuberbier**

### **See the Light in your life!**

#### **I. Past**

#### **II. Present**

#### **III. Future**

*12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." 13 The Pharisees challenged him, "Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid." 14 Jesus answered, "Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. 15 You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. 16 But if I do judge, my decisions are right, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. 17 In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two men is valid. 18 I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me." 19 Then they asked him, "Where is your father?" 20 "You do not know me or my Father," Jesus replied. "If you knew me, you would know my Father also." He spoke these words while teaching in the temple area near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his time had not yet come.*

Our world has seen a fair share of darkness. Over half a century ago, Nazi lines were spread throughout much of Europe. Jews were taken against their will to concentration camps where they were tortured, used as test subjects of cruel medical experiments, and killed in large numbers. As the battles of WWII went on, The number of casualties piled up in the millions. Even today it may seem like we're in dark times as we see the pictures and videos of the flooding in Colorado, hear about the flooding and the damage its brought in Colorado, and read about the mall shooting in Kenya. And some of this might make us wonder what the future has in store for us. Will there be more calamity and disaster or will there be peace, stability, and security for the world?

It seems like no matter where we look in time—the past, present, or future—there is always darkness. But Jesus promises there is a light in all dark times of life. And he wants us to see this light. So this morning see the **Light in your life—past, present, and future.**

#### **I. Past**

Darkness had made its way over God's chosen people, the nation of Israel. There was almost five hundred years of radio silence from the last time one of God's prophets foretold the coming Messiah. Their political rights were also oppressed for a long time, and now they were at the mercy of the Romans who afforded them only a handful of freedoms. Fortunately, they still allowed the Israelites freedom of religion, but even that was going under oppression.

There was a religious faction called the Pharisees who cast darkness even over the spiritual life of the Israelites. They convinced people they had to keep God's law perfectly if there was even the slightest glimmer of hope they would enter heaven. They would show off how they kept the law perfectly, and would put down the common worshipper around them, making them feel spiritually inferior. And, worst of all, they convinced themselves, and much of Israel with them, that the Jesus of Nazareth they were seeing performing miracles and fulfilling prophecies was not the promised Savior. They rejected God's own Son who came to save the world. And they cast themselves into the darkness of unbelief.

So Jesus decided to confront them. He attended the annual Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem and debated with them in the temple courts for a whole week. He spent hours explaining how he was the promised Messiah who would come to save the world from its sin. And now, on the last day he would meet with them, he said something that made it crystal clear who he was, he told them, **"I am the light of the world" (v 12)**.

The Pharisees and some of the other Jews there would have known what he was claiming. They knew their Old Testament very well. About seven centuries before this, the prophet Isaiah wrote, **"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" (Is 9:2)**. Jesus was the light Isaiah was talking about. Jesus was the light that would dawn on the people walking in darkness. And now, some of the Pharisees and other Jews who were there saw the Light! Jesus, the Light of the World, had brought light to the unending darkness of unbelief they were in. He shed light on the dark path their sins had placed them on. He also showed them they didn't have to keep the Law perfectly to earn eternal life. Jesus, the Light of the World, had brought the light of faith the lives of some of those who were listening to him. He had come to take away the darkness of their **past**.

And John, the Gospel writer who recorded this story for us, even gives us the personal account of one of these Pharisees—Nicodemus. Nicodemus, like the rest of the Pharisees, had spent his days in complete darkness, burdening the people of Israel with the impossible standard of spiritual perfection. But one day when Jesus was near, Nicodemus pulled Jesus aside and asked if they could meet under the cover of night. Nicodemus was curious. Jesus told him, **"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16)**. And Nicodemus believed. He was pulled out of the dark despair of his **past**, he saw the light.

All of us can relate to Nicodemus' story. Consider your **past**. At one point in your life, whether you realized it or not, you were in complete darkness. Your Savior and the forgiveness of sins were completely hidden in darkness. You lived day-to-day without the direction of God's Word. Even if you were born into a Christian family with Christian parents, you were still born into darkness because of original sin. But then, the light shone! It cast away the darkness. The Holy Spirit brought you to faith!

When you came to faith, the Light made so many things visible to you that were hidden for so long in the darkness. You learned all about your Savior and the full and free forgiveness he won for you on the cross! You were born again into the Light through the waters of Baptism! You began to view the Bible as the place to go to find light when dark times closed in on your life. Think about it. You've come a long way from where you

were in the **past**. The Light of the World brought you out of the dark pit your sins and unbelief had placed you in, and led you to the light of each new day of grace!

## II. Present

And you and I continue to see that light today. Jesus promises that you and I will see it each and every day. Jesus' light still brightly shines on us. He says, "**Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness**" (v 12).

Jesus himself promises us now that we follow him in faith, we will never walk in darkness again. But it doesn't always seem that way does it?

Do you ever feel like you're lost in hopeless darkness when you think about all the sins of your past and get depressed because you feel like a worthless human being, and a terrible Christian? Do you still give into the sinful desires of your addictions and feel worse each time you failed to say "No" to them? When situations in life seem impossible, when you've fallen on dark times, have you failed to trust in your God to provide and lost hope in things working out? Have you ever felt you've sinned so terribly and carried through with so many dark and evil desires that the light of forgiveness will never cause this darkness to go away? That there's no hope for forgiveness? That there aren't even any bright spots in your everyday lives? I know I've felt like that before. Haven't you as well?

Think about what the Light of the World went through for us. He faced the darkness in our place. He took on human flesh and entered the darkness of the sinful human race and lived among spiritually dark sinners like you and me. He was tempted by these same dark, evil desires, but never once gave in. He had the ruler of the darkness, the Devil, tempting him and appealing to his greatest human needs, but he never fell into the darkness of sin. And he placed himself in the darkest darkness any person could ever experience, as he took every one of your sins, my sins, and the world's sins and died with them on the cross. He made those sins disappear, and let His glorious triumphant light shine! He marched through hell in a victory march proclaiming that he had defeated the devil and his angels and put to death the sins of the whole world, my sins and yours.

He rose from the tomb in glorious light on the third day and shed light on the whole world. He pushed away the darkness of when you've felt terrible for sins you've committed in the past. He scattered the darkness of the guilty feeling over giving into your addictions, you're forgiven for those times. He's overpowered the darkness of when you've failed to trust in God to provide for you in dark times, because he's brought you to realize his powerful Light. He's even brought the light of forgiveness to you for the dark terrible sins you committed you thought would never be forgiven. In fact, the light shines just as bright there.

So continue to follow Christ! There's no time like the **present**! You follow Christ and drive out the darkness when you turn to the source of light that's found throughout the pages of your Bible! You drive out this darkness when you reflect on the incredible work your Savior lived repelling darkness, which gives incentive to do the same. You drive the devil and his dark forces away when you come forward to receive Holy Communion twice a month. So continue drive out the darkness, to push the devil away. Follow Christ, the Light of the World! See the Light in your life—in the present.

### III. Future

And as you think about the **future**, when you think about everything that can, might, or will happen, remember Christ's promise from today, **"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (v 12)**. Don't forget that one little but important word—will. We *will* never walk in darkness. We *will* have the light of life.

And there's another light Jesus wants us to acknowledge. It's a light at the end of the tunnel, the light of eternal life. So, whenever health threatens you, your friends, or family, remember the light at the end of the tunnel. Whenever there are problems at work, focus on this light. Whenever hardship, disaster, or difficulty crosses your path, see the light at the end of the tunnel! And as the hours, days, weeks, months, and years slip through your fingers and you come closer to the light, remember that even the best experiences you've had on this earth don't even come close to matching up to the joy and bliss of eternal life.

Because at the end of all this, when our life here on earth comes to a close, we will pass through heaven's gates and enter the glorious light of heaven. John describes it this way in Revelation when he talks about the city in heaven, the New Jerusalem, **"The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light and the Lamb is its lamp. . . On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. . . Nothing impure will ever enter it" (Revelation 21:23,25,27a)**. In heaven, no darkness will ever come near. No sin, temptation, no death, no unbelief, nothing but the brightness of the light of the glory of God the Father for all eternity. That's what we have in store for us in the **future** when we reach the end of our days on earth.

**So see the light in your life!** Whatever difficulties or troubles life's brought your way, **see the light in your life!** When dark times sneak in, **see the light in your life!** When temptation and sinful desires are creeping into your life and bringing darkness with them, **see the light in your life—the light of your past, present, and future**. See Jesus Christ, See the Light of the World! Amen.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever (Eph 3:20, 21)! Amen.