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John 12:34-36; 1:1-14 – *The Light and the Life*

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We are a week and a half removed from Christmas...

A few days past New Year's Day...

And, I don't know about you...

But I'm exhausted.

The holidays are a special time...

But they can be draining.

We spread ourselves thin with visiting family...

Which can bring out the best in people...or not.

There are extra worship services to prepare for and attend...

And this year especially...

It seems like sickness visited a lot families.

I know we had 2 Medicentre visits and 1 trip to the emergency room between us...

1 sinus infection, the flu, head colds, and ear infections.

I'm exhausted.

I feel like the past month or two we've been in a sail boat...

The winds have barely been blowing in our favor...

So we've been at the oars expending all of our energy...

Paddling, trying to keep pace.

Now we've hit the doldrums where there's no wind...

And we're low on strength.

What we need is a long sustaining gust of wind to fill our sails...

We need something that will spark us and invigorate us for the start of this year.

Where do we turn for life in these times?

This morning we're talking about vision...

Knowing where we're headed.

And to do this we'll be looking at the theme of light.

Today is Epiphany Sunday—

And, while we're not looking at the traditional story of the Magi—

We're still talking about the light and life that the appearance of Christ brings.

### John 12:34-36

<sup>35</sup> Jesus told them, "You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going. <sup>36</sup> Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light."

### John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

<sup>9</sup> The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. <sup>11</sup> He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— <sup>13</sup> children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

<sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The Word of the Lord. (**Thanks be to God**)

"Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going." (12:35)

It sounds like a saying of Confucius...

But it's actually from our reading today...Jesus says it.

I remember waking up one day—

I was probably 10 or 11—

I came downstairs and greeted my dad...

And saw that he had a big gash on his forehead.

During the middle of the night he got up to use the washroom...

The door was open and away from the wall—

At just the perfect angle—

So that when he came out of his room into the dark hallway...

He ran right into it...

Cut his head open.

“Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going.”

What is darkness?

In the Gospel of John darkness takes on at least 2 different meanings:

First is a lack of knowledge...or ignorance...

Darkness is merely the absence of light.

1:5 which says, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not *overcome* it”...

Is also translated “the darkness did not *comprehend* it.”

Darkness did not understand light...

There is a gap of knowledge here.

“Jesus came into the world, but the world did not *recognize* [*know*] him.”

The second way that John uses darkness is not just an absence of light...

It’s a positive presence of evil.

This is the idea of light = good and darkness = bad.

Darkness is actively opposing light:

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not *overcome* it.”  
(1:5)

“Walk while you have the light, before darkness *overtakes* you.” (12:35)

So, darkness is not just ignorance, but it actually poses a threat to us.

A disturbing picture of this is painted for us in C.S. Lewis' book, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* from the Chronicles of Narnia.

A group of explorers has set out from Narnia on a ship, the *Dawn Treader*.

They're looking for the 7 Lost Lords of Narnia...

So the book is about their travels and adventures to these distant lands.

They are 12 days removed from their last land fall—

Sailing east on the sea in search of new land...

Hoping to find another one of the Lost Lords—

Around 9 in the morning they come up to what they think is land...

But it can only be described as Darkness:

“Imagine,” Lewis writes, “looking into the mouth of a train tunnel.”

“A tunnel either so long or so twisty that you can't see the light at the far end.”

“For a few feet you would see the tracks and the gravel in broad daylight...”

“Then there would come a place where they were in twilight;”

“And then pretty suddenly they would vanish altogether into smooth, solid blackness.”

They decide to proceed with the *Dawn Treader*...

They row into it...

Into the “utter blackness as if they had come to the edge of moonless and starless night.”

After rowing for a while, having lost sight of any light, they hear a cry...

“Either of some inhuman voice...”

“Or else a voice of someone in such terror that they had almost lost their humanity.”

“Mercy!” cries the voice.

“Mercy! Take me, even if you strike me dead.”

“In the name of all mercies do not fade away and leave me in this horrible land.”

A wild looking man—

A man with a stare of pure fear—

Is brought aboard the ship.

“Fly! Fly! Row for your lives away from this accursed shore...” he pleads.

“This is the Island where Dreams come true...”

“Dreams—do you understand—come to life, come real.”

“Not daydreams: dreams.”

They realize that he’s talking about nightmares...

At once they grab their oars and start rowing...rowing...rowing—

Faster than they’d ever rowed before—

But all they have around them is Darkness.

Are they heading in the right direction?

Are they headed towards the light or deeper into the Darkness?

They can’t tell.

Suddenly they start hearing noises:

One of them hears the sound like a giant pair of scissors opening and closing;

Another hears the sound of things crawling up the sides of the ship...

Their dreams are coming true...whether real or imagined...

And they don’t know the way out.

All they see and *feel* is Darkness.

This is life without light.

This is darkness...the absence of light and active evil...

Life without a connection to the Creator.

Darkness enters into our world as a result of human sin.

Ever since the first sin—

When humanity violated the terms of the perfect relationship we had with God—

Darkness has filled the world and our lives.

People are living in darkness today.

Not people off in distant lands...

People in Balwin and Belvedere, Beverly and Rundle, Highlands and Clairview...

People that we see every day:

There are people that live near us who have no hope.

Maybe they think that all there is to life is the monotonous routine of work, eat, sleep, repeat...

A life devoid of any passion and joy.

People around us are lonely...

No close relationships or anything meaningful to live for.

People around us are confused...

Thinking they have to resort to petty crime to get by.

There are young people around us struggling to find their identity...

Being born into their family's culture from the old country...

But now trying to figure out just who they are.

They don't feel like they belong to their family's culture...

But they don't belong to their new Canadian culture either...

Their gasping for life...trying to find their way out of the dark.

There are our neighbors who have addictions—

Some hidden and some in the open—

To alcohol, opioids, and different forms of sex...

It's their attempt at rowing out of the darkness of their lives...

Rowing and rowing but only plunging themselves deeper into the darkness.

The world that *we* live in—

Northeast Edmonton—

Is dark.

But into the darkness there shines a light.

Aboard the *Dawn Treader* someone sees a tiny speck of light ahead...up high.

A broad beam of light falls from it onto the ship...

And the *Dawn Treader* lights up as if by a search light.

In the beam of light, they see what looks like a cross...

But as it becomes clearer, they see that it's an albatross.

The bird circles the ship and then lands on its front.

It then takes flight again...slowly ahead...

Allowing the *Dawn Treader* and its crew to follow it out of the darkness.

A light comes to *us* that cuts through the darkness.

Jesus Christ comes to this world as *the* light.

And he is the light because of who he is and what he does:

Revelation and salvation.

Jesus Christ is the light because *he is God*.

The Word, Jesus Christ, was with God in the beginning.

The intimate breath of God...a part of him—

The ultimate divine self-expression...

The Word of God...by which the heavens and the earth are created—

Was with God in the beginning...

And he was God.

The Word is God...

Becomes flesh, and makes his dwelling among us.

Before, God was only known through different media:

Through fire, clouds, angelic messengers, and visions God revealed himself...

He revealed only a veiled piece of himself.

But now he fully discloses himself in a person like us...Jesus Christ.

Where there was once ignorance of God (darkness)...

Now he has clearly been made known.

Jesus Christ is the Light.

He shows us God...

This is who he is.

*What* he does is accomplish salvation.

Jesus Christ comes to us in our deepest darkness...our deepest need:

When we were separated from God;

When our lives lost all meaning because we were disconnected from the author of life;

*This* is when Jesus the word...God...came to us.

He is crucified by the powers of darkness for our sin...

Is raised from the dead by God...

And shines the way to life...

Back into relationship with God.

Jesus Christ shines his light and busts through the darkness around us.

In him is life, and that life is the light of humanity. (1:4)

Revelation and salvation...this is the light.

Jesus Christ is the light...

**And that light is still shining.**

This is where we get wind in our sails for 2020...

This is what gives us the energy and the passion to keep going.

The light of Christ is still shining—

But not through Jesus' physical presence...

He was raised and ascended to the right hand of the Father—

The light of Christ is now shining through us...God's people.

By the power of the Holy Spirit the light of Christ shines through us...

And we carry it into the darkness.

We carry it to those crying out:

“Mercy! Mercy! Get me out of this horrible land!”

“Don’t leave me in the darkness!”

We are the light of Christ over all darkness in the land:

We befriend those who are lonely;

We walk with those experiencing the messiness of life;

We are light when we hold someone’s messiness with them;

We live out the love and life of Christ wherever we are today.

This is what our proposed vision statement is all about—

Where we believe the Lord is leading us as a church:

Intentionally connecting

with Christ, each other, and our neighbors

for the glory of God.

We want to connect **with Christ** because this is the source of light...

Without Christ we slip off into the darkness.

We need his light to guide us and expose those sins that we are letting into our lives.

We don’t make the light on our own...

It’s Christ light shining out of us.

We want to **connect with each other** because we do not shine the light alone...

We are the *body* of Christ...

Together bringing his life to a world in desperate need of restoration.

We need each other to keep encouraged...

And to keep pursuing Christ when we are tired, or doubting, and struggling.

We shine the light of Christ together as God’s people.

Finally—

And this is where we get the biggest gust of wind for our sails...

What brings us joy and life—

**We connect with our neighbors.**

God is working to rescue those he has called;

He is redeeming everything he has created...

And our neighbors are a part of that plan...

That's why we exist as a church...to carry the Good News!

Maybe we're bringing light by helping our neighbors find work;

Maybe we're bringing light by meeting their social needs by being a friend;

Maybe the Lord will open a door for us to share the Good News of Jesus—

Who he is and what he has done—

And bring light to their spiritual darkness.

This is what gives us life.

This is what fills us up:

Connecting with our Savior, as a body, carrying his light into the darkness, all to God's glory.

Amen.