

## From Darkness to Light

I'd like you to think back to your childhood; for some folks that is longer than it is for others. What were some of the things that frightened you? Take fifteen seconds or so to think and recall. Now, based on your comfort level, I invite you to turn to a family member or friend and share your response. I can give you two minutes for this. Is there anyone who would like to share their response?

For the many who may have responded with "the dark" I think it is something pretty common for children as well as seniors. How many people here today are afraid to drive in the dark? How many of us use night lights in our house when before we only used them for small children? We want to be able to see. It is important for us to have that light so that we don't get fall and/or get injured.

For thousands of years, people have used light as a metaphor for safety, goodness, and even life. The dark was definitely fearsome for people in biblical times. If you grew up in the surrounding hill towns, you have a bit of an idea of what darkness was for the people before the advent of streetlights, etc. Sure, they may have had some sort of oil

lamp, but that did little to illuminate most areas. It was in the dark times when your flock could be attacked by wolves or bandits. It was also a time when robbers would descend on people, so you kept to any source of light you had. People did not travel by night unless they had ample protection.

It should come as no surprise, then, to find that the prophet Isaiah uses the darkness and light to help prophesy the arrival of the Messiah. In Isaiah 9:2, we read, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, a light has shone.” Today we read, “Arise, shine; for your light has come...” We are exhorted to come out of the darkness and to celebrate the light. We can come out of the unknown and into the known where we can clearly see.

The Magi, too, were guided by a light in the form of star, that led them to Judea. This light may have brought them from Persia or even from what is now known as Europe, Asia and Africa. From where they came is not the point on which we should dwell; the important part is that they came. Upon inquiry, they ascertained that the Messiah was to

be born in Bethlehem and found their way there. All of this is because they, too, were guided by a light.

Today, many Christian denominations celebrate the Feast of Epiphany. While we know that it is traditionally recognized on January 6, we do so one day off from the calendar. Epiphany means “an illuminating discovery, realization, of disclosure.” If we have had a great epiphany, it is often symbolized by a lightbulb or a fire, something that give us light. “Hey, you’re on fire!”

Remember, though, where there is fire or light, there is the possibility of getting burned or blinded.

The idea that we can be blinded by the light is very real to us. Something so good, like the love of God who allowed for the Incarnation, God to dwell among us as Light, can cause us to not be able to grasp the importance of the Light for us. We can get caught up in the fact that the Messiah came to save us and then, we choose not to follow his commands to love our neighbor as ourselves, or to “forget” to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and shelter the homeless; it is in this that we are blinded and can no longer see the Messiah. If we get lost and

then get too close to the Light or consumed in the holy without being mindful of the world around us, we can also get burned.

My friends, God has given us the light, but with this gift comes responsibility. As we go forth from here this day, let us follow the exhortation made to Abraham to walk before God and to be blameless. How blessed are we, that, as the body of Christ, we get to bask in the light. We, in turn, become the light to others as we become Christ to those around us.

Let all of us continue to seek the light, follow the star, and keep our hearts open to it. Consent to where it takes us. When it is called for, be like the magi and take risks to follow that light and be the light. Share your light, your very own gifts, with your church, local, and global communities as you are able. Come out of the darkness into the Light of Christ. Amen!