

# Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

December 8, 2005  
Midweek Advent 2

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Genesis 3:15  
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 2  
Second Lesson: Acts 26-39  
Gospel: Matthew 1:18-23

## The Light is Foretold

This evening, our readings point us to focusing on how the Light has been foretold that would come into the darkness.

When do you need a light? Do you need a light at high noon or do you need it at midnight? You might need it at high noon if you are in a windowless room inside someplace, I suppose. But it won't do you any good if it was there a day before you needed it or it showed up a day after you needed it. You need that light to be there when there is darkness.

In our first reading, we are confronted with the blackest of darkneses. Mankind had just said to God, "We don't need you. Our mind is better than your will. We know better and we want to be like you, knowing good and evil, so we are going to eat that fruit." There is a darkness that was impenetrable by anything that mankind could bring about because mankind had sinned and God should have crushed mankind right then and there, but God sent a light immediately when there was darkness. Immediately, as after he told us of the fall into sin he tells us of the first promise of a Savior that would come and not crush our head but crush the serpent's head, crush Satan's head. That light first shown 4,000, 5,000, 6,000 years before that Messiah was born. That might raise the question, what good is a light that comes so long ahead of time, so far ahead of time? How can it do us any good?

It is beyond just good. It is an incredible comfort for you and me to know that our God, when there was immediate darkness, promised immediate light. God spoke this message immediately so that there would be comfort and confidence, not just for Adam and Eve, but for you and me because he knew that some thousands of years later, you and I would hear this message and know that we have a God who has loved us from the beginning of time and even before. That fact that the Light was foretold is of greatest comfort to you and me because it shows us that God would transfer that darkness, that death that we deserve, to a promised Savior who would come and have his heel struck when he died for our sins.

Our first lesson is from Genesis 3:

*"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."*

### Time for Silent Meditation

Why was it necessary for God to put enmity between the offspring of the woman and the devil?

What is your role in Satan striking Jesus' heel?

What is your role in Jesus crushing Satan's head?

Light is only beneficial if you know how to light it. If you are in a dark, unfamiliar room and you can't find the light switch, it is not going to do you much good at all. You are going to be left groping, stumbling and banging your shin on whatever comes into your way.

In our Second Lesson this evening, we meet a man, the Ethiopian eunuch, who was stumbling in the darkness. He was holding the Light right in his hand—one of the most beautiful Gospel sections of the Book of Isaiah. And yet without someone to explain the Light to him, he couldn't understand it because it's spiritually discerned and he wasn't understanding it. He needed to be shown how Jesus was the Light. So God sent Philip. He picked him up and plucked him from one place and put him there along the road so that he could explain to this man that he lived in the darkness of sin, and so that the Light of the Gospel could be turned on and shined into his life.

If God had not come to you and I through the Word and the Sacrament, we wouldn't get it. We couldn't come to this understanding on our own that from before time, God had known us, God had loved us and God had chosen us to be his own and that he would send his son to stand like a lamb before his shearers and remain silent so that he would perfectly keep every bit of God's law just because you and I fail to do it. We would never understand that he would carry a cross, but more than that, carry our sins to that cross so that he would be slaughtered as the lamb that takes away the sins of the world.

God knew some 700 years before this Ethiopian man picked up this scroll that one day, that would be the best news that he would ever hear. He knew that Philip would come and share the Gospel with him through those words. He knew that we would be gathered here this evening and hear these same words and be assured that our God loves us and our God has foretold our salvation that he worked ahead of time so that we might be certain that our sins have been paid for. Our God knows who the Ethiopians are in your life that he will bring into contact with you so that you might share God's law and God's Gospel with them so that the Light is turned on and they see the joy that is theirs in Christ.

We read from Acts 8:

*Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road--the desert road--that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship and on his way home*

*was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."*

*Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked.*

*"How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.*

*The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture: "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth."*

*The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.*

*As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.*

### **Time for Silent Meditation**

Philip was ready to speak. How ready are you to explain the God's Word? How will you get ready?

Think of the people in your life. Who is the Eunuch God sends you to share Jesus with? Be specific.

Philip was not ashamed to point people to Christ. Are you comfortable talking about Jesus? How does the fact that God has forgiven you for the times you were ashamed motivate you to speak?

Sometimes the light is turned on and you don't like what you see. You maybe go down into the basement and pipes are frozen. They burst. Things are flooded. Maybe you come home and open the door and turn on the light and see a shambles in your house—the remains of a burglar rummaging through everything that you own. Sometimes lights are turned on and we wish we could just turn them off and what we have just seen would go away.

Joseph discovered that his fiancé, Mary, was pregnant and he knew the child was not his. Now there's a light that I am imagining that he wasn't too happy to see. He has in mind to divorce her quietly and move on with his life. But God has to come and shine a brighter light and tell him what was about to happen very soon—tell him that his son, that true God was going to become true man, that the Holy Spirit had come upon his

fiancé and what was conceived in her was of God—true God, true man, who would live under the law in our place and yet have his life and death count for us all. God's brighter light chased away what had to be an incredibly hard thing for Joseph to think about. It was replaced with the joy that was beyond expressing.

When the light of God's Word shines into our lives, into our hearts, into our thoughts, it shows us some things about ourselves that we don't like to see. It shows us our sin in all its darkness, bleakness and blackness. We see ourselves for what we are from God's point of view when we look at his Word. But then God shines into our hearts the brighter light of his Word, which we call the Gospel—the good news that Jesus, the God-man who came to this world did it to take away our sins. And that brighter light assures us of a joy that passes all understanding, a joy that cannot be taken away from us unless we just decide to go some other way on our own. But nothing in all creation can take that joy from us as long as we remain in the Light of God's love and in his Word and in his Sacraments because when we are in those means of grace, we see that God keeps his promises—the promises foretold long ago because the serpent's head has been crushed.

We read from Matthew 1:

*This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.*

*But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."*

*All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" --which means, "God with us."*

### **Time for Silent Meditation**

Joseph had in mind to divorce Mary quietly. He did not have in mind to seek revenge. When do you struggle with seeking revenge on those who have sinned against you? How can you find strength to overcome this temptation?

Where do you need to the light of God's Word to shine into your life to guide you? What are you going to do to get the light into your life?

God knew beforehand every sin you would commit today, even in this service, yet he still sent Christ for you. What could you possibly contemplate that would be more important? Rejoice in Christ!