

# Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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December 15, 2005  
Mid Week Advent 3

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Ezekiel 12:21-28

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 98

Second Lesson: Acts:17-26

Gospel: Luke 10:21-24

## The Light is Revealed

Was it ever your task to get someone out of bed in the morning and you just couldn't do it? Did you resort to having to turn the light on so that there is a bright light in their eyes? Did that work? Did you have to get a reading lamp and put it right in front of their face to wake them up? Sometimes it takes a bright light to wake us up. Sometimes a bright light unintentionally wakes us up. When I went to high school, I went to Michigan Lutheran Seminary and stayed in the dorm. Every night at 10:00 p.m. the power went out. They would have a wind up clock and all that stuff to get you up in the morning. But of course, one of the great joys in life when you are a Sophomore in high school is going down the hallway and turning on all the lights you can and see how many they don't notice so that the next morning at 6:00 a.m., when the power comes back on, the lights come on and it makes them jump up out of their bed. Bright lights can wake us up.

God had given, through prophecy, glimpses of the Light that was coming. He gave a glimpse here. He gave a glimpse there of what that Light would be like. He said he is going to destroy the serpent's head. He is going to come from the descendent of Abraham even though Abraham doesn't have any children and he is 75 years old. He is going to come from the Tribe of Judah. Not the Levites, not the priests, not the others, but from the Tribe of Judah. He is going to be born of a virgin. He is going to be a conquering king. He is going to be a suffering servant. These glimpses were given over more than a thousand years to God's people—one here and one there. The Light wasn't bright enough for them. They ignored it. They looked the other way. They had more important things to do. They said, "It's the same as it ever was—you say this and nothing happens. You say that and nothing happens. This prophecy God speaks of is nothing but a waste of my time. I've got better things to do."

So through Ezekiel the Lord came to the people and said, "A bright Light is coming and it is coming soon. Wake up. Pay attention. Repent. I will fulfill prophecy. Believe—don't doubt." And the people yawned at him.

In Christ we believe, not because we are better than the people that Ezekiel spoke to, but because the Spirit worked in our hearts through Word, through baptism and through the Lord's Supper. Through the Spirit's work, we believe in Christ and we rejoice in this great Light and we surround ourselves with lights to remind us the most important thing to focus upon is Jesus. Our doubts still come, but through the Spirit, we overcome our doubts.

We read from Ezekiel 12:

*The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, what is this proverb you have in the land of Israel: 'The days go by and every vision comes to nothing'? Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am going to put an end to this proverb, and they will no longer quote it in Israel.' Say to them, 'The days are near when every vision will be fulfilled. For there will be no more false visions or flattering divinations among the people of Israel. But I the LORD will speak what I will, and it shall be fulfilled without delay. For in your days, you rebellious house, I will fulfill whatever I say, declares the Sovereign LORD.'"*

*The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, the house of Israel is saying, 'The vision he sees is for many years from now, and he prophesies about the distant future.'"*

*"Therefore say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: None of my words will be delayed any longer; whatever I say will be fulfilled, declares the Sovereign LORD.'"*

### **Time for Silent Meditation**

At times, do you have the same sinful attitude towards God's promises about his second coming as the Israelite's had about the Messiah's first coming?

How is God working to call you to repentance?

If Christ were to return on Christmas day, would you find yourself more focused on Christ or on your family's celebration and gift exchange?

Why do we need God's reminders to be ready for the Second Coming?

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I didn't know I had left the flashlight on and of course, that is the kind of thing you don't find out until you need it, right? You need it. You go there. You find the switch on. You walked away and you didn't know the switch was on. The batteries are long gone. The batteries didn't care that you didn't know that it was left on, right? The batteries just kept on burning that light away until it was nothing.

Not knowing—that is the very definition of the word "ignorance", isn't it? Ignorance doesn't prevent things from happening. In our Second Lesson this evening as Peter speaks to the crowd he says, "I know you were ignorant. I know you didn't know what you were doing." But then he reminds them that ignorance is not an excuse. Then in a very subtle way but in a very direct way he reminds them that they shouldn't have been ignorant. They should have known the Light. They should have recognized the Light when he came into their lives because prophecy after prophecy had pointed them to the One who was coming. But when that Light came, they looked the other way.

This time of the year it is kind of easy to look the other way, isn't it. There are all kinds of things that distract us and make us want to take our eyes off of the Light who enters

into our life through Word and through Sacrament. We have all kinds of things to do—shopping, we have to entertain people at our house; we have to go to their house to be entertained. A lot of things can distract us and direct our attention away from God even without us knowing it. This time of the year we need the reminders to stay focused on the Light, stay focused on Jesus Christ, because anything that distracts us from Jesus Christ is not beneficial. It is worse than not beneficial. It leads us to sin. If it takes our eyes off of Jesus and says this is more important, that distraction is dangerous even if it is a long-standing holiday tradition for us.

Times of refreshing that Peter talked about don't come from the things we do. It doesn't come from our holiday rituals. Times of refreshing come from Jesus Christ. As Christians we want to just throw off everything that distracts us. We want to say, "Lord, forgive me for my distractions. Forgive me for my lack of focus. Forgive me for my ignorance." And focus on the one who lived perfectly because it is obvious we don't. We want to focus on the one who died as the punishment for our sins so that we won't. As we do that, we find what Peter spoke of—times of true refreshment.

We read from Acts 3:

*"Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people.'"*

*"Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days. And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.' When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways."*

### **Time for Silent Meditation**

Look at Peter's quotation of Moses at the end of the first paragraph. Does it frighten you?

For believers in Jesus, "times of refreshing" have indeed come. We know our sin, but we also know the one who took away every sin through his life and death. Rejoice in your forgiveness!

We also need to realize that we meet people each and every day who do not know the One to whom every prophet pointed. What will you do to point people to Christ? Are you ready to point people to him, instead of pointing them to your church? If not, what will you do to get ready?

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There is something calming, even comforting, about just sitting and basking in the light of a fireplace or a bonfire just gazing at the flames and listening as they snap and crackle. Just sitting and gazing has always had this calming, comforting affect on me. I don't know exactly what it is that does that. It's not the flames. It's not the light that comes from the flames. I am pretty certain of that because if you go home this evening and your house is engulfed in flames and it is lighting up your yard, I don't think calm and comfort is going to be the first emotion that comes over you, is it?

It's interesting, isn't it? The same exact thing in different situations can have such completely different affects. It is kind of interesting when you think about it because it is the same way with us and God. At least it should be by nature.

We have come together this evening in the presence of the Holy God. When you sat down this evening and you looked toward the altar, were you seized and gripped with terror? You are in the presence of the Holy God. Think about how many people throughout Scripture reacted with abject terror when they were confronted with the holiness of God. Yet, we don't tremble in fear. We find comfort. We find healing. We find calming in the presence of our God. We know this shouldn't be because of who we are. But it is who God is that makes us calm and comforted as we hear of God's love for us in Jesus. The Spirit soothes us with Word and Sacrament as he says to us, "It is done. The prophecies are fulfilled. Everything that I said would happen to take away your sins has taken place. You are forgiven."

The prophecies the disciples were blessed by God to see fulfilled are the same things that the Spirit uses to comfort us. What the prophets longed to see that they couldn't see, you and I get to see with the eyes of faith each and every time we gather together and worship our God. Rejoice! You are forgiven! Heaven is yours! God loves you!

We read from Luke 10:

*At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure."*

*"All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."*

*Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it."*

### **Time for Silent Meditation**

Through the eyes of faith you have seen the fulfillment of prophecy. You have seen what Moses, David, Isaiah, and all the others longed to see! What an incredible

thought! Yet Satan still gets you to focus your time and energy on less important things.  
What temptation works best on you to keep you from the Word?

When Jesus was “full of joy through the Holy Spirit” he thanked God for you. For whom do you especially thank God when you are full of joy in the Spirit? How will you thank them personally?

Knowing the Son and the Father is the most powerful thing in the world. It is a power God has called you to share. He chooses to make himself known through the voice of his people. He has forgiven you for the times you were silent. How does that move you to make him known to more people?