



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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December 24, 2010
Candlelight Worship
Sermon Text: [1 John 1:1-9](#)
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Micah 5:2-5a](#)
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 96](#)
Second Lesson: [1 John 1:1-9](#)
Gospel Lesson: [Luke 2:1-20](#)

The Word of Life Appeared To Bring Light Into Darkness To Purify Us From All Sin

The words I just read to you are from John's first letter. What do you remember about John from the Bible? What do you remember about him? He is the apostle that Jesus loved. We are also told that he is the only one that we know of that died of old age. He didn't die a martyr's death. When you read his letters, it's kind of like when you are young and crawling up on Grandpa's lap and having Grandpa tell you "This is what it was like in my day, and these are the things I think you should know and learn." Did you ever have that experience with a parent or grandparent where they told you stories about their youth? When you were young and you listened to them, it was like watching paint dry. You just didn't want to listen. You couldn't wait for it to be over so you could go do something else, right? Then you got a little bit older and you listened intently and you learned from it. And the day finally came when they were gone and you wished you had paid more attention. You wished maybe you had written some of it down or maybe you had recorded some of it. If you've ever had that experience or if you can relate to that at all, I kind of think this is why God had John write these three letters that come more towards the end of his life as he writes to the young Christians and says "Here are the things that are really important for you to know." Can't you almost hear it when you hear him saying "*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of Life.*" (1 John 1:1). It's like he is sitting down the people and saying "I want you to know this. This is the most important stuff for you to know. I was there. I saw it. I experienced it. Everything I'm going to tell you about Jesus...I was there."

Think about it...John was one of the inner three. He got to see some pretty amazing stuff. He was on the Mountain of Transfiguration. Here is a guy that got to chat with Moses and Elijah, so to speak, at least hear them talk with Jesus before God called him out of this world. He is the guy that got to go up the stairs in that room when that little girl was raised from the dead. He was the guy that got to go with Peter and James and see all this other stuff that the other nine didn't always get to see. So when he is sitting down and starting to spin his tales and tell his stories saying "*We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us*" (1 John 1:3), he's not just saying "look at me," is he? He's saying, "*And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*" (1 John 1:3).

And here's the pretty cool thing...at this time of the year, you get all these Christmas letters from people. They are kind of fun to read so you can catch up on people. But notice what John says about why he is writing to the people he wrote to and why he is writing to us yet today. He says, "*We write this to make our joy complete.*" (1 John 1:4). He wants you and I, people that he never would have even dreamt of when he wrote these words, to know Jesus Christ, the one who was born in Bethlehem as the light that has entered the darkness, as the light that is the one that takes away our sins, as the light whose blood purifies us from all sin. He wants nothing more than to tell his stories to us today so that we know what the fuss and the hoopla and all the lights that we are surrounded by in church and at home are all about.

He doesn't really mince words when he wants to tell his grandkids or us his story, does he? He says, "*This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.*" (1 John 1:5). God is light; in him there is no darkness at all is contrasting God and us really. God is light is that he is holy. As we live in this world, there are times when you and I might think God doesn't always know what he is doing. We might question why God allows things to happen the way he does. We might wonder where he is and why he isn't doing things the way we would do it if we were God. But when he says God is light; in him there is no darkness at all, he is reminding us that God is absolutely holy, absolutely perfect. He has a knowledge that is above our knowledge. As far as the heavens are above the earth, so far are his ways and his thoughts above our ways and our thoughts, as the prophet tells us. As we go about our daily life, it's kind of easy for you and I to forget that. We think we know all the answers.

But here is this gentle reminder from Grandpa John, "Now just remember this truth...God is light. He is completely holy and completely perfect. There's no darkness in him." He'll get back to reminding us of the darkness that is sin, the darkness that exists and comes not because of God but because mankind turned it's back on God. Mankind didn't obey God in the Garden. Mankind thought they could become like God. Ever since then, the world has been ruined by sin. Ever since then, there are people like you and like me that think at times we know better than God. John starts us out by reminding us the truth that the darkness is in us. The sin is in us. The imperfection is in us. That lack of knowledge is in us. The inability to see the whole big picture of life, that's in us. For in God, there is no darkness. It's all light.

If we claim to have fellowship with him, that means we are going to want to also be in that light. We are going to strive to live in holiness and righteousness and we aren't going to do it. At times we are going to slip and fall back. That's why he tells us at the end, "*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*" (1 John 1:8-9). That glorious truth is centered in the truth that the Word of Life became flesh and lived among us. He came to this earth, not because he was darkness but because we are darkness. He came as the light of the world. All these candles that are lit in church are to remind us that Jesus is the light of the world. That light is the Word of Life. That's what John wants us to focus on, not on ourselves,

not the successes or failures that we might have had, but on the complete and absolute success that Jesus had in our place.

As the light that is the Word of Life, he lived perfectly where you and I have sinned. He never doubted God. He carried out his Father's will perfectly. Then he carried every one of our sins to the cross and shed his blood so that his blood can purify us from all sins. This is the confidence that we can live in, not just at Christmas, but every day of the year.

We have fellowship with him. We don't just claim it, we have it. The Spirit has given us the gift of faith. Through the Word and the Sacrament, he wants to continue to nurture and nourish that gift of faith. He wants us to get closer to him. Not only does Grandpa John want to draw us into his arms and sit us on his lap and tell us the story of Jesus, God himself wants to draw us closer and give us his very body and blood and give us his Word to strengthen our faith so that we can have fellowship with him and with one another. That's the gift that our Savior gives us.

We, who were darkness, are now light in the Lord. We, that could not reflect light because we were so sinful, now have been given the privilege of reflecting that light and sharing it with others. Now we get to be Grandpa John and tell our little ones and our friends and our neighbors and our loved ones and the people that maybe we don't love so much but we just kind of tolerate, we get to tell them the good news that in Christ our sins have been purified. The darkness is gone. And the Light of Life lives in our heart. Don't neglect that light. Let it burn brightly in your life every day, not just at the end of December, every day of the year. Then we'll have the peace and the joy that John desperately desires for us.