



Holy in a Manger- Lights
Sermon Discussion Questions – Dec. 11

Scripture Passages:

John 1:9

The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

Matthew 4:16

“The people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”

Isaiah 9:1-7

Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. . . 2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. . . 6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

Isaiah 8:19-22

When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? 20 . . . If they do not speak

according to this word, they have no light of dawn. 21 Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God. 22 Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness.

Warm Up:

1. Growing up during the Advent season, my parents would pull out this Advent calendar. Each night we would pull out a new character out for that day and add them to the nativity scene. After we added it my parents would expand about their role in the Christmas story. We did this every year until I moved out of my parents' house, but I am sure it is something I will do with my kids one day.

What traditions do you have or remember in this season leading up to Christmas?

Discussion:

1. Starting out this week Pastor Tom explained a traditional Christmas meal. He talked about the center of this meal being some sort of meat and then the various sides we might make to go along with it.

Do you typically have a traditional Christmas meal? What do you normally have or what is your favorite?

2. We also recapped last week where we talked about how many people live mean or average lives when it comes to their faith. Pastor Tom began by explaining how Christmas is an invitation to make our faith the center of our lives rather than something we place to the side.

Thinking about your journey with your faith, how have you experienced this? What might it look like for faith to be the center of someone's life?

3. Pastor Tom tells us a life with Jesus is holy. When describing holiness, he offers two words that help capture this. These words are consecration and sanctification. Consecration is being dedicated to God and his service; this is our part. Sanctification is being set apart from sin and being made holy; this is God's part.

What has your experience with the idea of holiness? How might have you mixed up or jammed together the roles of consecration and sanctification?

4. Read John 1:9 and Matthew 4:16. Each of these verses use this imagery of light and inversely also uses the imagery of darkness.

How might you use the same imagery of light and darkness to describe different parts of your story?

5. “The message of Christianity is things really are this bad and we can’t heal or save ourselves... The Christmas message is that on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned” – Pastor Tom.

How have you experienced each of these messages in your own life? What did these messages cause you to do?

6. “God alone has this light, this truth, this joy and this life, the abundant life and we cannot generate it on our own”- Pastor Tom. There can be times where we might have tried to fill our schedule, lives, and hearts with things that we thought brought us joy but ultimately did not.

What things have you tried to fill your schedule, life, and heart with that ultimately did not bring you joy? How has meeting Christ changed what you do with your schedule, life, and heart?

7. Read Isaiah 9:1-7.

What are your initial reactions to this passage? What do you find most encouraging or challenging in these verses? The light we can recognize is only through Jesus, who is to be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. How have you seen God characterize each of these names in your life?

8. “We catch sight of a new key principle—the power of the Higher, just in so far as it is truly Higher, to come down, the power of the greater to include the less . . . Everywhere the great enters the little—its power to do so is almost the test of its greatness. In the Christian story God . . . comes down; down from the heights of absolute being into time and space, down into humanity, down further still, if embryologists are right, to recapitulate in the womb ancient and pre-human phases of life . . . down to the very roots and seabed of the Nature he has created. But He goes down to come up again and bring the whole ruined world up with Him . . . One may think of a diver, first reducing himself to nakedness, then glancing in mid-air, the gone with a splash, vanished, rushing down through green and warm water into black and cold water, down through increasing pressure in the death-like region of ooze and slime and old decay; then up again, back to color and light, his lungs almost bursting, till suddenly he breaks surface again, holding in his hand the dripping, precious thing that he went down to recover”- C.S. Lewis.

What are your reactions to this quote? What is Lewis saying about God’s power and presence here? How might this connect to the message of Christmas that light was coming into the world?

Next Steps:

1. Take a few moments to reflect on where you are at with your faith. Would you say your faith is the center of who you are, or would you say it is more of a side or part of you?
2. Lean into becoming holy. Our job is to be dedicated to God and his service, it is God’s job to set us apart from sin and transform us to be more like Him. What might it look like for you to dedicate yourself to God in a new way this week.

3. Share the Christmas message to those living in the land of darkness so they too can experience the light.