

SERMON GUIDE

The Light Promised

Isaiah 9:1-2



SERMON NOTES

Just a few weeks ago, the town of Utqiagvik (Oot-qiag-vik), Alaska (formerly known as Barrow) saw its final sunset for the next 65 days. They are the northernmost town in the United States and because of the earth's axis this time of year, go 65 days without sunlight. It is dark, both day and night. Citizens report the place is a very "heavy place" during that time. The crime spikes. Abuses of every kind go up. The police department gets calls from citizens feeling disoriented not knowing the time of day or day of the week. But eventually the darkness gives way to light and the sun emerges. And with the sun comes celebrations, festivals, and dancing. The long darkness finally gives way to light.

This theme of darkness and light are prominent throughout Scripture and Christian thinking. In fact, Advent (which begins today, December 1st) is anticipation of the arrival of something. When people talk about the advent of the social media era or the advent of inhabiting Mars with Elon, we are talking about the arrival of that season, era, or thing. Christians have described this period of the liturgical calendar as Advent because it is the season of celebrating the coming of Christ into the world. From December 1 to December 25th, Christians practice the period of waiting for the birth of Christ. Now we know Christ has already come, but the practice of waiting reminds us of not only what those before us did, but what we still do today in waiting for Christ's Second Coming.

But there is a connection of Advent season to light. This is why candles and festive lights are prominent in connection with this season. Jesus is the Light of the World coming into the land to dispel the darkness. The beginning of the Bible introduces this theme. God brings creation into existence with the command, "Let there be light." Light represents order, goodness, and life. But in Genesis 3 with the Fall of Man we see darkness enter the land. Darkness represents ignorance, evil, and despair. That's why our passage today is so significant. The promise of restoration and redemption was a promise of light. The Messiah and Redeemer would come as light to defeat the darkness.

Exegesis

Isaiah 9:1-2 – *But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made*

glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. ² The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.

Zebulun and Naphtali are mentioned in this passage. They are northern territories in Israel (Galilee). These were the first places to be invaded by the Assyrian armies (772 BC) during the fall of the northern kingdom. There was much "gloom" and "anguish" over this. These regions became symbols of humiliation and spiritual darkness due to their subjugation and proximity to the Gentile nations. But there is a promise of restoration to come. Despite their disgrace, Isaiah prophesies that these regions will experience a reversal of fortune and will be the first to witness the light of God's salvation.

People walked in darkness, meaning that they walked in a state of spiritual blindness and separation from God. They were ignorant, in despair, and dead in their sins. The prophecy points to seeing a great light. There is hope and salvation. There is renewal promised where there was only despair. They dwelt in a land of deep darkness. They could not rescue or save themselves. This was a perilous problem that humanity could not save itself from. Only divine intervention could break the darkness.

They have seen a great light. They didn't produce the light. They have seen it. God is the source of light, and His actions are not a response to human goodness or deservingness, but grace. God promises His people a coming light in the midst of darkness. And this light is portrayed as a person. Calling Him "light" demonstrates what He will come to do: He will come to provide light for people to see; He will come and lead people out of darkness; He will come to defeat evil; He will come to deliver people from the darkness of sin and into the light of salvation.

This prophecy of light is ultimately about Jesus. He is the promised light to come. Jesus Christ born into the world is the dawning of the light. The darkness of Satan, sin, and death are overthrown with the coming of the Light. This theme is portrayed all throughout Christian history.

Augustine (in the 400sAD, who we covered in the Cloud series years ago) contrasts the "City of God" with the "City of Man," portraying light as divine truth and darkness as earthly rebellion. Augustine says this, "Christ is not the sun, but the sun's Creator; not the light that now appears, but the light that was made to appear by Him." Medieval Theology captured this theme with imagery of Christ as the "Light of the World" in art, hymns, and even architecture (stained glass symbolizing divine light penetrating

earthly darkness). The Reformation emphasized the "light of Scripture" breaking through the "darkness of ignorance and superstition." Calvin said, "It is the task of the church to make the light of Christ shine visibly in the world." And today we even think of evangelism as the taking of the light of the gospel to the unreached dark places. We have families from here around the world this morning for that very purpose.

Application

1. The Light Helps Us Overcome Personal Darkness

Jesus brings light to our lives. He delivers us from sin, despair, and spiritual blindness. He helps us in those "dark nights of the soul." Friends, I talk to enough of you to know that there are different troubles each of us face and endure. We have families grieving loss. We have people battling crippling anxiety and depression. We have parents with complications with babies in their wombs currently seeking treatment while waiting. We have so many things in our lives. Personal darkness is real. Some are battling real sin struggles, temptation, addictions, and much more. Friends, Jesus is the light that overcomes the darkness. Comfort in our mourning. Peace in the midst of anxiousness and uncertainty. Strength in our temptations and addictions. Hope for us all. Friends, lean upon Christ. Don't try to carry everything by your own strength. Cast your burdens upon the Lord and He will help you overcome personal darkness. Don't be guilty of only talking about these things. Faith takes action to trust Christ through them.

2. The Light Calls Us to Shine the Light

Believers are to live as children of light (Ephesians 5:8-9), reflecting Christ's light to the world (Matthew 5:14-16). We do that by walking in the truth and speaking the truth in a world of life. We do it by loving our neighbors and caring for those in need. We do that as we forgive others, show kindness, live generously, and more. There is a need to point others living in darkness to where the light is found. We want people to know the truth and to trust Jesus. We need to help others respond to the gospel with faith. One reason we are starting a school, and replanting churches is we want the light to shine bright and spread beyond what we are doing here. You can shine a light everywhere you go: to your spouse and children, to your parents, at school, at work, to your neighbors.

3. The Light Gives us Hope in Darkness

There is an ongoing presence of darkness in the world today. Light has dawned, and the darkness cannot overcome it. But there is still darkness. Sin still exists. Death still exists. But, friends, the light of

Christ is triumphant and eternal. We have great hope even in the midst of darkness. Light has come. And light is coming again.

Five years ago today was the darkest day of my life. It was a Sunday morning and while the church gathered, my family gathered around my son's bedside to say our final goodbye on this side of Heaven. But Jesus, the Light of the Word, gives us hope in darkness. We do not despair because of Christ. We do not lose hope. We look to Jesus, the Light who has come, and He comforts us in our grief and mourning, and He promises us of a great restoration of all things to come. He has been that to us. He will be that to all who look to Him.



- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you grow in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you go to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?
- What is a sin you have been struggling with that you need to repent of?



- **REVIEW**
 - Read John 1:1-18 and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different translation.
 - Additional Scripture
 - Matthew 4:16
 - Matthew 5:14-16
 - Luke 1:78-79
 - Ephesians 5:8-9
 - What big takeaways did you have from the sermon?
 - What did this teach you about God?
 - What did this teach you about man?
 - What did this teach you about salvation?
- **DISCUSS**
 - What parallels can you draw between the physical darkness experienced by the people in Utqiagvik and the spiritual darkness described in Isaiah 9:1-2?

- What “personal darkness” are you currently facing, and how can Christ shine light into that situation?
- Ephesians 5:8-9 and Matthew 5:14-16 call believers to live as children of light. How can we practically reflect Christ’s light in our daily lives?
- How have you seen light overcome darkness in your own life?
- What is a practical step you can take as a result of this sermon?
- **MEMORIZE**
 - **Matthew 22:37** – *And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”*



- **BUILD UP:** How will you grow in your love and knowledge of the Lord this week? We have several discipleship opportunities for you to participate in.
 - **Life Groups** are a time and place to connect and learn to better follow Jesus together while abiding in Him. Life Groups are the primary means of disciple-making at TJC. Our groups focus on connecting, learning, following, and abiding. Groups meet weekly on various days/times across Wilson County.
 - **MDWK** is a time of education and growth in order to build up the Journey Church body. We offer a handful of intentionally chosen classes that cover a broad range of topics and are taught by quality teachers from within our congregation. Classes are at 6:30p every Wednesday. Contact Morgan Cates (morgan@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **TJC Women** seeks to equip women to be rooted in the Word of God and bold in their faith. Our events and small groups focus on letting the gospel shape all spheres of our lives. Gather is the first Saturday of every month. Contact Laura DiLeonardi (laura@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **TJC Men** exists to equip men to show Jesus as incomparably glorious in every sphere of their lives. The men’s ministry meets on the 2nd Saturday of every month at 8:00a in the student center. Contact Morgan Cates (morgan@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **TJC Students** is passionate to see every parent equipped, every leader developed, and every student disciplined into baptized, self-feeding, disciple making followers of Jesus who are letting the gospel shape every sphere of their lives. Our student ministry meets on Wednesday nights from 6:00p-7:30p for MDWK worship and Sunday mornings at 8:30a and 10:00a for small group. Contact Larry Davis (larry@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **TJC Kids** believes that the Gospel saves, sanctifies, gathers and sends. It is our desire to see our kids understand that the Gospel truly does change everything and we will do this primarily by teaching our kids to love Jesus, showing them they can have fun in the process, and making sure they stay safe. Contact Nick Judd (nick@tjclive.com) for more information.

- **TJC Young Adults** exists to equip young adults ages 18 to 29 in becoming passionate followers of Jesus who enter their life in Christ. We do this through intentional relationships, fellowship, and worship centered around the gospel. The Fount meets Tuesdays at 7:00p. Contact Hunter Christian (hunter@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **SEND OUT:** Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear this story, your story, or the gospel? We have several opportunities for local and international missions.
 - **For the City:** Acts 1:8 calls us to be engaged where we live and among the nations. The people of TJC seek to bring truth, grace, and hope to Lebanon and the surrounding area by mobilizing the church to be salt and light, not only for the city, but for your city. Take part in faithfully and obediently using your gifts to declare God's glory among those who are hopeless living among you today. Contact Jeff Long (jeff@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **For the Nations:** At TJC we exist to show Jesus as incomparably glorious to Lebanon and beyond. We are ambitious and passionate about strategically taking an active role in finishing the Great Commission as we actively pursue the unreached peoples of the world by mobilizing the entire church to pray, send, go and welcome international friends among us. Contact Shawn Casto (shawn@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **PRAYER**
 - **Pray over any request from your group members.**
 - **Pray for our directional elders:** Shawn Casto (Mobilization Pastor)
 - **Pray for our replanters:** Christ's Fellowship (Gallatin)
 - **Pray for our short-term teams:**
 - Central Asia Team departing on March 7, 2025
 - Southeast Asia Team departing on March 7, 2025
 - Europe Team departing on March 21, 2025
 - Southeast Asia Team #2 departing on April 25, 2025
 - **Pray for our long-term units on the field:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Starks
 - **Pray for the unreached.** Want to keep up with Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>