

Introduction:

- Part Two of Christmas, An Invitation to Life, Let's Go See The Lights!
 - One of the beautiful things about Christmas is the lights. IE. KC Lighting up the Plaza. 8 miles of lights on 15 city blocks. Kids love Christmas lights! Me too! The darker it is the prettier they are!
 - Kids and Adults love night lights. Kids, because they are scared of dark. Adults because they are scared of legos on the floor.
- In Luke 1 God sends the angel Gabriel to visit Zechariah the priest, the virgin Mary and Joseph.
 - When JTB is born, Zechariah sings a prophetic song about Jesus and also about his son John.
 - *““And you, my little son, will be called the prophet of the Most High, because you will prepare the way for the Lord. You will tell his people how to find salvation through forgiveness of their sins. Because of God's tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace.””* (Luke 1:76-79, NLT)
- If you live in darkness you will eventually say, “Lets go see the Light!”

I. Those Living In Darkness Is. 9:1-2; Luke 1:76-79**A. Who are those who are living in darkness?**

1. When we go to Isaiah 9, we get a glimpse of what Zechariah is saying in his word over his son, John. Zechariah speaks of those living in darkness. Who are they? *“Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory.”* (Isaiah 9:1, NLT)
2. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali. Hardly ever hear these names in scripture. Yet these rather obscure names make it into the Christmas story.
3. A bit of Jewish history. When the nation of Israel was split under Solomons son. 10 tribes went north and became the nation of Israel. Two tribes, Benjamin and Judah went south and became the nation of Judah. Jesus grew up in the town of Nazareth in Zebulun. Jesus ministry headquarters was located in Capernaum, which was in Naphtali. These two regions together were known as Galilee. It was heathen ‘hick’ central of Israel. It was a trade route from the Mediterranean to Syria. On the sea side were the Canaanites and the east side the Syrians. Both Canaanites and Syrians conquered this section of Israel. Because it was a trade route it was filled with Gentiles. It was a ‘dark’ section of Israel as well as Jewish history. The people were mostly uneducated, thus: Jn 1:46 *“Can anything good come from Nazareth”* or Acts 4:13 of Peter and John, *“they noted these were uneducated men who had been with Jesus.”* Therefore it was only fitting that Messiah would humbly come out of this place of ‘darkness’, this place of fear, this place of poverty. Those living there, “have seen a great light!” *“the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow, a light has shined.”* (Matthew 4:16, NLT) The land where death casts its shadow!
4. If you live in continual darkness you want to experience the Light! If you live where death casts its shadow you want to experience the Light!

- B. Years ago my parents took our family to Mammoth Cave Kentucky. In the middle of the tour of the cave the guide stopped and asked us. "Do you want to see what a real cave looks like?" he asked. Thinking he was going to take us on a side trip that was different than the usual tour, every one eagerly agreed. So, without another word... the guide reached over and shut off all the lights. From the depths of darkness that we had never seen before we heard, "That's what a REAL cave looks like." APPLY: Caves can be really scary places especially when all the lights are out. I'm told that - in the total darkness of those moments - many people begin to get a little edgy. In fact, if the lights remain off for any length of time, some people can even begin to panic.
- C. Who are those living in darkness?
1. The prophetic impact of that statement is directed to everyone who is outside of Christ. It is to those who live out side of a personal relationship with God. That is darkness! It is dark when people lose hope. It is dark when you are a prisoner...bound in darkness. Darkness is not known as the most friendliest place to dwell. Nor is is the most pleasant place to dwell. In the Bible darkness has to do with evil and wickedness. Darkness is the eternal abode, dwelling place of those who die outside a personal relationship with Christ. It is tragic!
 2. 1 Jn 4:8 says, *God is love*. To not have or not know the love of God is to live in darkness!
 3. Darkness has to do with punishment and eternal separation from God.
 - a) Punishment for refusing the invitation. "*But many Israelites—those for whom the Kingdom was prepared—will be thrown into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*" (Matthew 8:12, NLT)
 - b) Punishment for not being prepared. At the parable of the wedding feast, a man without the right garment was thrown out. He was not prepared. "*Then the king said to his aides, 'Bind his hands and feet and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*" (Matthew 22:13, NLT) The prior scripture was directed at Jews the last at whosoever.
 - c) Punishment for not being about the Father's business. For those who are unproductive in the Kingdom. "*Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*" (Matthew 25:30, NLT)
 - d) Punishment for refusing to be conformed to Christ. "*The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armor of right living.*" (Romans 13:12, NLT)
 4. Those who are living in darkness are separated from God. And without Christ, this separation is forever. Those living in darkness have no relationship with God for He is Light and Love. Can you imagine being forever separated from God, dwelling in darkness, living in a place that is filled with vile and violent people who refused Christ and whose screams forever are sealed up in that dark lake of fire.

II. Let's Go See The Light! IE. "Let's go see the lights, PawPaw!" Amen! Let's go see the Light!

- A. God is light! 1 Jn 1:5 You have to come to God. You have to come to the Light. It is not enough to see the light you must come to Him. Many see the light but walk away.
- B. Who are those who live in the Light?

1. They are those who have come to Jesus. They saw the light and came to the light. *"The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it."* (John 1:4-5, NLT)
 - a) The Word gave them life (Zoe) and that life was LIGHT!
 - b) And the darkness cannot extinguish or dim the Light.
 - c) Don't run from the light! IE. Cockroaches run from the light. IE KC cockroaches, Haiti...
 2. They are those who have been born again!
 - a) *"For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light!"* (Ephesians 5:8, NLT)
 - b) *"For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son,"* (Colossians 1:13, NLT)
 3. They are those who have been called out of darkness. *"But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light."* (1 Peter 2:9, NLT) How does God do this? He starts putting people in your path to show you the Way. He starts putting His grace on your heart so you want to 'come home.' He begins 'whittling down' your strength so that you have to trust Him. All of this is to call us to come closer to Him.
 4. They are those who come to God. *"This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all."* (1 John 1:5, NLT)
- C. Those living in the Light have a relationship with God. There is no separation from Him. This relationship is meant to be forever. They know God as Light and as Love. They dream of being with Him forever, no more sadness, no more tears, no more suffering. Peace beyond what could ever be imagined.

III. Responding to the Light

- A. If you love darkness more than light. You are in trouble. *"And the judgment is based on this fact: God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil."* (John 3:19, NLT)
- B. Love Jesus and you will dwell in the light.
 1. *"Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.""* (John 8:12, NLT)
- C. Trust Jesus and you will not remain in the dark. *"I have come as a light to shine in this dark world, so that all who put their trust in me will no longer remain in the dark."* (John 12:46, NLT) Trust Jesus and you will not live in darkness, nor be bound by darkness, nor be tormented by darkness.
- D. Here is how you respond:
 1. See what He has done for you. Jn 3:16; Romans 5:8
 2. Believe/trust Him Eph 2:8-9 Save by grace through faith. Ro 10:9-10 believe in heart and confess with your mouth and you will be saved.
 3. When you believe you make Him Lord of your life.

Conclusion:

- You see, it's an invitation! God is offering you life and light. But you have to receive it. "COME AND GET IT!"
- You have to come to the Light. It is not enough to see the light you must come to Him. 1 Jn 1:5 God is light.
- Isaiah said it this way: *"Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink— even if you have no money! Come, take your choice of wine or milk— it's all free! Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength? Why pay for food that does you no good? Listen to me, and you will eat what is good. You will enjoy the finest food. "Come to me with your ears wide open. Listen, and you will find life. I will make an everlasting covenant with you. I will give you all the unfailing love I promised to David." (Isaiah 55:1-3, NLT)*
- Without Jesus there is no light to push back the darkness of death. This is what Christmas is all about. Jesus pushing back the darkness! Jesus pushing back the effects of darkness.
- The grave remains a final door from which there is no returning. You have to make the decision now. Not later.
- Jesus came:..."to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace." (Luke 1:79, NLT)

I read a story of a man who used to work in the carpet cleaning business and enjoyed success selling a pet urine removal process. He carried a high powered black light in his van and upon smelling pet odor, would ask if the homeowner if he would like to see the extent of the damage. Being composed of proteins, urine glows under a black light. With the lights out and shades drawn, the homeowner would follow him through the house. Usually, there were far more spots of dried urine than the owner expected and often it could be seen on drapes, stereo speakers, the back of the couch, and splattered on walls. The reactions were often quite dramatic. One lady said, *"I don't care what it costs, just clean it up!"* Another said, *"I'll never be comfortable in my home again."* **APPLICATION:** The black light didn't cause the problem, it only revealed it. The offense was there all the time, causing a bit of a stink, but when the extent of the problem could actually be seen, most people were ready to do something about it. We live in sin to the extent we get comfortable with it, but when the light of God's righteous law shines upon our lives, we can see our offenses for what they really are. It would have been cruel for him to show homeowners their problem without being able to help them. God shows us the mess we have made of our lives. He 'shines' the light on it. But He too is in the cleaning business. By the blood of Christ our sins can be washed away and the gift of eternal life secured. *"Come now, let's settle this," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool"* (Isaiah 1:18, NLT).

"The way of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, which shines ever brighter until the full light of day. But the way of the wicked is like total darkness. They have no idea what they are stumbling over." (Proverbs 4:18-19, NLT)