

Daily Devotional, December 9, 2021 Letting the Light of Christ Shine Through

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. John 1:1-5 (NIV)

It was mid-November and I noticed that people were early in putting up their Christmas decorations. Later that week, I happened to mention to someone that I saw lights going up already and their face light up as they shared that they had put up their Christmas tree early. Over the next few days, I brought up the topic with others and found many had already put up their Christmas decorations much earlier than they normally would.

I have a sense that many people were decorating early partly to beat the colder temperatures looming ahead, but I also guessed that it may also have been due to what these past few years have dealt us. I think that this year in particular, there is a natural yearning for the season of Christmas. There have been times that have felt dark with the rising number of COVID-19 cases and deaths, and the disconnect we've felt from one another in not being able to be together for the Christmas festivities for so long. Seeking the Light of Christmas makes sense in the midst of darkness.

The colorful lights on the tree, the festive candles we light, and even the lighted Santa and reindeer displays are all playful reminders of the true Light of Christmas. We are instinctively drawn to light.

Consider how light can be captivating: The ever-changing flames of a crackling fire are mesmerizing, so much so that there are television stations like Youtube that broadcast the images of lit fireplaces during the holidays. Then of course there are the twinkling lights on our Christmas trees that always seem to bring joy. And even a single candle, even in a large darkened room, will hold your attention for substantial periods of time.

Of course, if you only have one lit candle shining in a very dark space, you'll focus on it because there's nothing else to look at--it's the only thing you can see. Maybe that's the point of Advent. Advent is a time when we focus on the Light as if it's the only thing we can see. While the darkness might at times seem frightening, it's what you focus on that matters.

This Advent, I want to make a suggestion that might help you to be more reflective as we draw closer to the Christmas season. Make a point of dimming or turning off the lights when you light the candles in your Advent Wreath, or wherever you place your Christmas candles. Let the shadows overwhelm all your busyness, electronic devices, and to-do lists. Let the distractions fade away in the background while you focus on the candlelight. Take a moment to pray and listen for Christ, the Light of the World. Then give thanks for the Light you receive from Him and ask how you can share His light with others. Remember that nothing can extinguish the Light and His love from your life.

And yes, join in and decorate for Christmas—whether early or late, it is amazing how much better a year like this past one looks in the Light of Christmas!

Prayer: Jesus, bring your light and restoring presence to the dark places in our lives. Bring your hope to hearts that feel defeated. Bring your love and compassion to those in pain. Show us glimpses of your presence with us and the comfort you bring. In the busyness of today, help us to take a moment to be still and sit with you. To slow down, breathe deeply, and release our burdens to Your strong hand. You are trustworthy, good, and true, and we thank you for caring for us so deeply and wonderfully. Open our eyes to see you at work today. Give us your light. In Your most holy name, Jesus, Amen.