

“The True Christmas Light”

“The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world” John 1:9.

Every year as the Christmas season overtakes us, we are met with the same challenge as the years before – recapturing that elusive Christmas spirit. Certainly, those favorite, seasonal songs and movies capitalize on this idea as each one in their own way attempts to rekindle that mystical, Christmas magic of yesteryear. Each Christmas season, it seems that the search starts all over to find at the very least, one glimmer of joy, or perhaps just one ray of hope, or simply that one guiding light in the midst of all the present darkness.

In so much of the Christmas media around us, the search for Christmas spirit, Christmas magic, or that Christmas light, begins and ends with that moment or experience that assures us that there is some good still left in humanity. Our faith in life and people is to be restored because the right individual came along for the relationship; or because a dire need is met with a heartfelt and lifechanging response; or when hardened, wintered hearts are melted by the realization of all the work that needs to be done to make up for the difficult and selfish things that they were responsible for. It’s experiences like these that are promoted as satisfying ends to the hunt for Christmas spirit, Christmas magic or Christmas light.

As heartwarming as those experiences are, have they ever felt too brief to you? Here just for a season and then gone for a lifetime? As touching as those moments can be, do they ever feel empty or hollow? Like a beautifully wrapped package with nothing actually inside? As encouraging as those actions appear, have they ever felt like they just aren’t enough to make a difference? That one good deed can’t truly produce a glimmer of joy, a ray of hope, a guiding light that pierces through the expansive darkness ready to swallow it up? Does it ever seem like that Christmas spirit, magic or light can only ever be an idea of our imagination and never a concrete reality?

Sadly, it does so often seem that to capture some sort of Christmas spirit, magic or light, we have to suspend our real-world experiences for as long as possible. The right individual who comes along for the relationship is merely a temporary fantasy and distraction from all those relationships we have with the wrong individuals, whom we dread. That one dire need that is met doesn’t feel so lifechanging since it’s one small drop in a ginormous bucket of need. A hardened, wintered heart that has melted evokes more skepticism than hope because we don’t expect it to last knowing how little it takes for the heart to be hardened again. Can Christmas spirit, magic or light really be captured if most of the popular examples for the Christmas season anchor us to things that are so fleeting?

An honest answer to this last question, I believe, is no. True Christmas spirit, magic or light isn’t ultimately captured by the popular examples of the modern-day Christmas season. While these examples fill us with Christmas fervor, it’s a passion that lacks a firm foundation. This is why we gather again today. Even after all the pageantry of this Christmas season that for most appears to have already culminated, we return this Christmas Day for the foundation, another reminder about the true Christmas light we celebrate this Christmas season, our Lord and Savior Jesus. Today, in John’s less familiar account of Jesus’ birth, we are reminded that Jesus is our true Christmas light.

Listen again to what John writes about Jesus, the Word made flesh, and His birth, **“The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world”** (1:9). This is the Bible’s very, different answer to our search for Christmas spirit, magic or light. The Bible’s answer isn’t just an experience, moment or idea. It is a very physical, tangible person, Jesus, God in the flesh. Jesus, the true Christmas light, has come to us. There is no more need for a yearly search! Jesus has removed our challenge to capture this Christmas spirit, magic or light. He is this for us and has placed Himself into our lives, into our hands so that we might grasp true Christmas light even in the darkness of this world.

The true Christmas light isn’t about restoring faith in life and people, it’s about restoring faith in the God who eternally cares about His creation. Only because of Jesus can we claim anything truly good about humanity. His sinless life was what all of us other sinful humans aspire to come somewhat close to and can’t and His death is the redemption our sinful lives so desperately need. Jesus took on flesh, because there wasn’t another human being good enough to consistently trust in this life. He became man and died and rose so that all of humankind could admit their sinful shortcomings and through faith in Him receive grace upon grace instead wrath and destruction.

This true Christmas light isn’t about suspending our reality with some jolly distraction, it is about the God who has defeated sin, death and the devil so that we might have the joyful reality as God’s children. Jesus, our true Christmas light, doesn’t temporarily distract us by trying to get us to forget the struggles of this world, instead He is our light to see through these dark trials to the eternal joy and hope He delivers to all God’s children. He is our Christmas light for every relationship, every need and every heart.

And if we’re tempted to think that this answer to our search for Christmas spirit, magic or light will be just as brief as all the other options out there, John reminds us today, that Jesus, the very Word of God, is eternal, who has been with God the Father from the beginning. He isn’t going anywhere! He is the same yesterday, today and forever! Jesus, our true Christmas light, was, is and will be! He isn’t just here for this Christmas season, He is here for your lifetime and mine!

And when doubts creep in and we start to think that Jesus, as our Christmas light, is just a hollow sham, John reminds us that Jesus isn’t some empty package with beautiful decorations. Instead, the very opposite is true. Jesus was decorated with such humble means, as a helpless infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, but in Him is the most glorious gift of all, life eternal! Even through humble means of water, bread and wine, Jesus the Word made flesh, continues to deliver this glorious gift of eternal life!

And now, even in our present world of darkness, when it appears that our true Christmas light, Jesus, is going to be snuffed out by political laws, erring church bodies, unbelieving loved ones and so much more, John encourages us with this reminder that this Christmas light isn’t defeated by this world of darkness. No, it shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. This Christmas light is in no danger of flaming out and He will continue to enable His people to reflect His light for His glory until He returns.

So, dear forgiven and redeemed children of God, take heart, for Jesus, your true Christmas light, has come! Your true Christmas light is here today! Your true Christmas light always remains! May Jesus always be your true Christmas light each and every season! Merry Christmas! Amen.

In Christ,

Pastor Dan