

“We Have Seen a Great Light”
December 26, 2010

“Creator of the Stars of Night” High Street Hymns

As you look around at Christmas, lights seem to be everywhere. One of my favorite things to do is sit in our darkened living room with only the Christmas tree lights turned on. There’s something so peaceful and calm and reflective about those moments. It’s a time when I think back over the past year and look forward to the new year.

This morning, that’s exactly what we’re going to do – look back at this past year. And then we’re going to look forward and think about how the amazing light of Jesus’ arrival on earth will affect us in the coming year.

Will you pray with me? (prayer)

As we enter into this time of reflection, you can follow along in the guide that was on your seat. You may want to write out your

answers as you contemplate what God has been doing in the past year.

*When the Holy Spirit controls our lives,
He will produce this kind of fruit in us:
love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness
(generosity),
faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
Here there is no conflict with the law.
Galatians 5:22-23 (NLT)*

Love

As you reflect on the condition of your heart, how tender do you feel toward God? Toward your family and friends? Are you reflecting Jesus’ love for those in need? Is your spirit critical or judgmental? Are you showing deep love for others, even when they are unlovely? (**Pause**)

*Heavenly Father, I desire to be more loving
toward those around me.
Make me more aware of my tendencies to be
judgmental.
Help me to see others as You see them.*

Joy

Do you find yourself feeling irritable toward situations and toward those around you? Are you speaking more words of complaint or of gratitude? Are you laughing and having fun? Are you able to choose joy, even when things are difficult or frustrating? **(Pause)**

Lord God, I truly want Your joy to rule my heart.

Help me to resist the temptation to complain.

Make me aware of Your presence even in difficult situations.

I desire for Your joy to be my strength.

Peace

Are your heart and mind at rest in God? Are you feeling troubled or anxious? Do you generally feel content or discontent? In your relationships with others, do you find yourself promoting peace or causing conflict? When faced with a difficult situation, do you add gasoline or water to the fire? **(Pause)**

Lord God, I recognize that often I depend on myself rather trusting than You. When I do that, I rob myself of Your peace.

Help me to be aware of the times I do that. I desire for Your peace to guard my heart and my mind.

Patience

How do you respond when things don't go your way? Are you able to wait graciously? Are you tolerant when others don't perform as quickly as you want? (**Pause**)

*Father in heaven, I confess I lack patience.
Help me to be more aware of my impatience
before I react.
Thank You for being patient with me.*

Kindness

Are you willing to lend a helping hand even when you're busy? How often do you encourage and affirm others? Do you say "please" and "thank you"? Are there hard places in your heart that cause you to respond in unkind ways toward others? (**Pause**)

*Lord, there are times I would like to excuse
my unkindness.
But according to Your Word, I'm insulting
You when I do that.
I confess my lack of kindness toward others
and
ask You to guide me in being more
encouraging and affirming.*

Generosity

Are you giving your time, money and material possessions to help meet the needs of the church, the poor and those around you? Do you tend to give from a mentality of scarcity or abundance? Is your heart growing or shrinking in your benevolence toward others? **(Pause)**

*Father, everything I have comes from You.
Remind me that I'm a steward of Your gifts,
not an owner.
Enlarge my heart toward those in need.*

Faithfulness

Would the people around you say you are dependable? Do you keep your word, even in the small things? Do you procrastinate? Are you using your spiritual gifts to serve God? Are you obedient to living your life according to God's Word? **(Pause)**

*Lord, help me to grow in my faithfulness.
Show me how I can be obedient in serving
You and those around me.
Let my faithfulness to others be a reflection of
Your faithfulness to me*

Gentleness

Are you consistent in speaking the truth with love and grace? How often do you find yourself angry? Do you have the desire to “get even” with others? Is your ability to listen growing? When was the last time you extended comfort to someone who was hurting? Are you moving too fast to remember to be gentle? **(Pause)**

*Lord, without the guidance of Your spirit, I
cannot be gentle.
Help me to become more consistent
in spending time with You and You alone.*

Self-Control

Are you aware of the habits that separate you from God? Are they becoming more or less troubling? Do you speak without thinking? Does your life seem out of control? Are you truly honoring God with your time? **(Pause)**

*Father God, I recognize my lack of self-
control
has a direct effect on my ability to come to
You in prayer.
Help me to turn to You first.
Keep my mind clear so I can hear
Your plans for me.*

And now it's time to look forward. We have just finished Christmas and yet there's probably nothing that sets this year apart – unless we take time to contemplate what to do with the answers to the questions we've just reflected on. Because that's the hope that we've been given –today, tomorrow, next year *can* be different. When we choose to follow Christ, we truly have seen a great light – not just at Christmas, but every day of our lives. We carry inside us the hope that one day, Jesus is coming again and will set this world to its proper order.

So in the next few moments, we're going to contemplate what we'll do with the light we've seen. What will we do with the hope we've been given in Jesus? Will we hide it? Will we ignore it? Or will we respond in new ways to God and how He's working in us and through us and around us?

We Have Seen a Great Light!

*The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.*

Isaiah 9:2

Is my life reflecting the merciful grace of God? What changes do I need to make so those around me are drawn to the amazing light of God's love through me? What one thing will I do differently in the New Year as an outgrowth of what God has done in my life in the past year? (**Pause**)

As a commitment to these changes in the coming year, I want to invite you to take communion in the next few minutes (direct to tables at front). Reflect on the person you would be without the light of Christ within you and then as you take communion, express your gratitude for hope we have in Christ.

As we close this time of reflection, I want to pray a blessing for the New Year over you.
Will you stand?

Blessing

God called you out of darkness,
into His wonderful light.
May you experience His kindness and
blessings,
and be strong in faith, in hope, and in love.

Because you are followers of Christ,
who are called to be lights shining in
darkness
may He make you a light to those around
you.

May God bless you in the coming New Year.

“Love Came Down At Christmas” High Street Hymns