

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, December 31, 2024
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“We Have Seen a Great Light”

READING: Isaiah 9:2 – “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”

Christmas was a joy! The music, the worship, the choir, the family gatherings, the presents, the trees, the cookies...all of it was a joy. And in the midst of all of that add the Christmas lights. Houses ablaze with colored lights – some with crystal clear lights, some houses outlined all in blue or all in red, and most with multi-colored lights that stood out in the darkness of our long winter nights giving everything a festive feel. As I drove through neighborhoods, I saw Christmas trees in various windows adding their glow to the season. Some houses had those projectors that cast images of snowflakes or stars on the whole exterior of the homes, changing colors and in constant motion. Here and there people had chasers that made the lights spark up in a series so they appeared to be racing along their length. It has all been wonderful to see.

But, alas, Christmas is over for many. Already this week there were people taking down their trees and their lights. They'll put them in boxes or tubs and store them in attic or basement until next year. The Christmas music on 106.9 and 102.3 stopped on the 26th of December. The inflatables and figurines are packed up, too. Christmas 2024 is over for many. Time to work on taxes or take a Florida vacation. It was fun while it lasted.

Not so the people of God. No, Christmas is not over for us. Many of us understand that the *season* of Christmas doesn't end until Epiphany on January 6. And we should also understand that the gift that was given us at Christmas is a gift that stays with us throughout the year. We put away our decorations, but the light of that Christmas message stays with us as we journey into the New Year and beyond. God's grace in sending us his one and only Son enlightens our souls and gives us a joy the world cannot and does not understand.

The prophecy of Isaiah in Chapter 9 speaks of the hope that God is giving to his people. Then it speaks to a people about to be carried off into exile to the lands and the authority of the Babylonian Empire. To them it will seem that they live in a land of darkness and death. Their homes wrenched away. Their families torn asunder. Their Temple destroyed and their religious lives in ruins. Their hopes and their dreams darkened and clouded. It'll be as though they have been put in their graves.

The Lord through Isaiah speaks words of comfort and hope. He says that there will again be light in their lives. He says that they will not be forgotten by YHWH, but deliverance will come. Their station will not remain static. There will be light in their souls once again. They need only believe and watch for their deliverance.

That same prophecy speaks to a larger audience and of a greater miracle. God gives a foreshadowing of the greater deliverance that will be accomplished by a greater Light. There will come that day when salvation will be made possible by the Lord's doing. His zeal will accomplish it for he wills to save his people.

All those twinkling Christmas lights are a sign and reminder of the Great Light that was born in Bethlehem all those centuries ago. To Christians they have a meaning beyond just brightening up the darkest days of the year. To us they symbolize God's fulfillment of the promises he made to Abraham, David, and Isaiah. To us they represent joy in Jesus' birth and the eternal hope that brightens our spirits.

Yes, those Christmas lights will have to come down. Unless you favor the "redneck lifestyle" you'll be putting those lights in storage until next Advent. But the light that Christmas kindles in your heart is there to stay. Christmas was wonderful. It was a joy. And it will remain so through the winter, spring, summer, and fall of 2025. For "the people walking in darkness have seen a great light...for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord!" That's it! That's the Light! That's what I'm talking about! A Blessed Christmas to you all. Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- 1) CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES: 5:00 and 11:00 PM with communion in both. CHRISTMAS MORNING SERVICE: 10:00 AM with communion.**
- 2) NEW YEAR'S EVE SERVICE: December 31, 5:00 P.M.**