

“Shine On”  
Isaiah 9:2, 6-7; Luke 2:1-20

Rev. Kenneth M. Locke  
Pastor/Head of Staff, First Presbyterian Church, Fond du Lac, WI  
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Christmas Eve

Shepherds. I’ve been thinking about these shepherds. Here they are, middle of the night, minding their own business, keeping watch over their flock out in the fields. And suddenly, there’s this angel. This angel who pops up out of nowhere and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. Which means they were terrified.

And then, after the angel delivers his message, there’s the heavenly host. A multitude of heavenly host praising God. There must have been light pouring over them. It must have felt like the middle of the day.

And then, they’re all gone. Nothing. Just shepherds in the darkness, with their sheep. Now what? Chat for a minute? Go back to bed? Well, that was interesting but, morning comes early, and we have things to do.

No! They have this urge, this great desire to go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass.

How are they going to get there? It’s the middle of the night. It’s dark. Wild animals. Bandits. Dirt trails you can lose in the dark. Of course, there are no paved roads. They have no streetlamps, no headlamps, no flashlights. At best they have a piece of wood they pull from the fire and that’s not going to last long. How did they get there?

It must have been a starry night. You reckon? It must have been a starry, starry night.

Do you like stars? I like stars. They’re pretty. They’re useful. They help us find our way. They must have helped the shepherds find their way to Bethlehem, to see the Light of the World.

Stars are a tremendous gift but only if we can see them. We can’t see them if there are clouds, pollution, or they’re too far away. The shepherds must have thanked God for the stars that night.

What about today's shepherds? How do they find their way to Bethlehem? There are still shepherds. Lots of them. We see them all the time. The doctor and the clerk at the store. The construction worker and the truck driver. The artist and the schoolteacher. They don't have sheep, but they're out there, doing their jobs, living their lives in great darkness without God. Living their lives with nothing guiding them but culture and tradition and what their neighbors think.

But some of them, maybe many of them, have seen the angels. They know there is a savior out there. And they want to meet this savior face-to-face. How are they going to get to him? How are they going to find their way?

Friends – we are their stars. We are their stars, you and me, as individuals and as a church. We are their stars, guiding them through the utter darkness of modern life towards the Light of the World.

But we can't do it if there are too many clouds around us, too many clouds blocking the view. We can't do it if the clouds of anger, greed, pride or envy are hiding us. We can't shine light on their journey if our own light is too small. If our own light has grown dim through indifference, or because we've neglected God. If we've stopped saying our prayers or reading our Bibles.

We, you and me, we know who Jesus is. We know he's the Light of the World. We know he's our Wonderful Counselor, our Mighty God, our Everlasting Father, our Prince of Peace.

But there are others who don't. They've seen the angels, no doubt about it. They've heard the heavenly host. But the twinkling of the stars is drowned out by all the clouds. The light of the stars has gone dim.

My friends, there are untold people, many near us, who are stumbling through lives of great darkness. They desperately need the Light of the World to shine on them.

Friends – we are their stars. We are their bright stars guiding their way. May we, as individuals and as a church, be the starry, starry night leading them to Bethlehem, to the Cross, and beyond. This night, and every night. May we be their starry, starry night. Amen.