

“We Can See Clearly Now”
Isaiah 9:2, 6-7; Luke 2:1-20

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First Presbyterian Church, Fond du Lac, WI
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If you came of age in the mid-to-late 70s, or even early 80s, it was a great time to be young. Polyester leisure suits, Farah Fawcett hair, and disco. Disco. Donna Summer, The Bee Gees, The Village People, KC and the Sunshine Band. Good times, good music.

One of the joys of those days was going to a disco. The blast of sound as you walk in. The mirror ball sparkling. And colored lights flying around the dance floor. Some of my best memories are those colored lights. Of course, they were regular lights, but they had colored pieces of plastic over them, colored lenses. Blue, orange, green, yellow, red, purple – you name it. Dancing at a disco was like being in a box of neon crayons. Colors everywhere.

The one thing you didn't want, though, besides tripping over yourself, was being there at the end of the night, when all the regular lights came on. That's when you saw the place as it really was. Tiny, cramped, dirty – but when the music was loud, and those colored lights were flashing and swooshing, it was pretty cool. Pretty cool.

What does that have to do with anything? I'll tell you.

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined.” What does that mean? How does that apply to us? We have light. We have the sun, the moon, the stars. We have streetlights and flashlights. We can see where we're going. Right? We can see clearly. We see things as they are. Or do we?

Say we drive by Broken Bread about 1:00, 2:00 some Friday afternoon. There's a long line of people waiting for food. What do we see? It depends on the lens we're looking through. It depends on the light.

When we see that long line of people do we see idle layabouts who need to get a job? Yes, if we are looking through the lens of culture. If we're looking at them through colored lenses that condemn everyone at the bottom of society as misfits and failures then yes, that's what we see.

But if we're looking at that line of people through the clear light shining from our Wonderful Counselor what we'll see are children of God who need compassion and direction. What we see depends on the light.

Let's say we're driving across America, admiring the countryside. What do we see? Wetlands that could be drained, old-growth forests ripe for harvesting, endangered species holding up progress, underground oil ready for fracking. Yes – if we view nature through the lens of something to be exploited and squeezed dry.

But if we look at our country through the clear light of our Mighty God? Then we'll see a great opportunity for stewardship of all these natural resources, all these gifts from God. What we see depends on the light.

Think of all the Angel Tree presents we collected and blessed last Sunday. Many of you joined me in the Fellowship Hall, laying hands on those gifts and blessing them. When we imagine those people receiving their gifts, what kind of people do we see? What do we envision? It depends on the color of the lens.

They aren't like us. Very different. Certainly, no one we know. That's what we see by looking through our lens of a secure home, food certainty, and a stable income. But if we're looking at them through the clear light shining from our Everlasting Father, we're

seeing sisters and brothers who need our help. What we see depends on the light.

We watch the nightly news for an update on the war in Europe. Do we see an evil aggressor who needs to be punished? Another European country sucking us dry? A war so far away and so removed we don't care who wins or loses? Perhaps – depending on which channel we're watching. But if we're watching that war through the clear light of the Prince of Peace, we see children of God who are hurting – on both sides.

What we see depends on the light.

When we look at our world, when we look at other people, when we look at the environment through the lenses of culture, bias, greed, what's in it for me, we don't see clearly. To borrow from St. Paul, we're seeing through a glass darkly. But looking at the world through the light of our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace we see clearly. We see what we are meant to be.

When we look at life through the lens of Jesus, we see the world differently. We see ourselves differently. We see ourselves as we are, and as we are meant to be.

The shepherds are out in the field. They have a marvelous experience with Angels and the Heavenly Hosts. They have this burning desire to go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass.

What are you, crazy? No one leaves the field and the sheep in the middle of the night to go back to town. Wild animals, robbers, sheep wandering off, missing the path in the dark and getting lost. These men have no flashlights. There are no streetlamps. There's the moon, the stars, and a stick of wood you pulled from the fire. That's it. Wait until daylight!

But the shepherds have been face-to-face with the angel and the glory of the Lord shone round about them and now they see the world differently. They see with a clear light, light from a savior.

They follow the light and go with haste. And when they had seen the miracle they returned, glorifying and praising God.

They used to walk in darkness, but now they have seen a great light. A light that flows from the source of justice and righteousness.

Discos were great, maybe they'll make a comeback, but the world is not a dance party. Viewing ourselves and the world through colored lenses of tradition, culture, television, politics and greed, we'll never see the world as it really is. We need to look at the world and ourselves as we are, as we are meant to be. We need to look at life through the clear light of the justice and righteousness of our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace.

May we see the world, and our place in it, through the Light of the World, our Savior, Christ the Lord. Amen.