

Rev. Janet R. Doyle

Elmer Presbyterian Church

4th Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 22, 2024

Scripture: Luke 2: 1-14

Sermon: The Word Made Flesh- Our Guiding Light

In 1989 Congress approved an act for the support of lighthouses, recognizing and preserving the proud history of these structures as beacons of safety for travelers on waterways throughout our country. The light guides ships navigating treacherous waters near the shore into a safe harbor. There are currently more than 1,000 active lighthouses in the US. All of these lights have been automated, and many others have been eliminated in the past, when they were no longer considered essential to navigation. Only one is still manned by a woman. Boston Light, the oldest lighthouse in the US, originally established in 1716, has been a National Historic Landmark since 1964.

Lighthouses were constructed at the most dangerous parts of the coastline. They found points of solid rock and sank anchors deep to support the height and weight of the tall columns. Pounded by waves and buffeted by fierce gales, these structures remain firm. Many lighthouses endure after hundreds of years of service.

Jesus can be our lighthouse. As Jesus was living on earth, He stood firm, unwavering in the face of oppression and death on a cross. As our resurrected Savior, He provides an unmoving, everlasting foundation in every circumstance as we talked about last Sunday that Jesus is the Rock and sure foundation; the cornerstone that we can build our foundation in life.

Listen to what it says in Isaiah 28:16: *“Look! I am placing a foundation stone in Jerusalem, a firm and tested stone. It is a precious cornerstone that is safe to build on. Whoever believes need never be shaken”.*

With modern navigational aids, ship’s captains continue to depend on lighthouses today. That’s because the lights shine, day and night, without fail. In years past, lightkeepers personally supplied the lights with fuel and

maintained them so no boat would run ashore. They knew the lives of sailors depended on their faithfulness.

The Book of Revelation says that when Jesus returns to earth again, He Himself will replace the sun as the illumination for the world (Revelation 21:23). As integral parts of His nature, power and light exude from Jesus, never fading throughout eternity

Each lighthouse has a signature light pattern. Sailors memorize the rhythm of each signal. The string of lighthouses along the coast serves as a map to let the sailors know their location. They carefully watch the patterns to navigate from one light to the next until they reach their destination.

Lighthouses provide an earthly example of a spiritual principle. In the same way, we must fix our eyes on Jesus' pattern and follow His directions. People often compare Jesus, the Light of the World, to a lighthouse. We live in a dark world filled with troubles. Jesus' light beams through the oppression to guide us into the safety of God's loving presence.

In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

John 8:12 says to us, "Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life.'"

In these powerful words, we find the very essence of our faith. Jesus, the Light of the World, our Guide through the winding paths of life, our beacon in the darkest of nights.

So, let us ask ourselves, what does it mean to follow the Light of the World? How does His light guide us, bring us joy, and illuminate the path for us?

Jesus is here to guide us, to show us the way, to help us avoid the pitfalls and overcome the challenges. He's here to lead us to our destination and light our way.

Here are some scriptures that remind us of the light and love of God: Isaiah 60:1-5 tells us, *"Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon you, and his*

*glory shall be seen upon you. And the Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.”*

Isaiah 9:2 says, *“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined.”*

Psalms 119:105 *“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”*

Proverbs 3:5-6, *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”*

There was a million-gallon tanker transporting crude oil that was passing through dangerous waters. The tactical radio aboard the ship heard a warning... immediately change your course, immediately change your course. The captain of the vessel replied: You don't know how big our ship is... YOU CHANGE YOUR COURSE NOW. The radio was silent for a minute... the voice on the other side of the radio came back... No, You don't understand, this is the lighthouse commanding you to change course.

God is our lighthouse and is there to guide us and help us along the journey just like a lighthouse, but we have to listen to his voice.

John 1:14 says, *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”* To take on flesh and be like us demonstrates to us God's LOVE for us. Jesus says to us, *“I am willing to go through every single thing you have gone through being God in human flesh.”*

To face all the challenges you face. To identify with you in this way knowing that in God's unconditional love we find direction and light along this life journey.

Here is an interesting true story about God being with us on our journey and helping us.

On Sunday afternoon, June 1st 1975, Darrel Dore was on an oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico. Suddenly it wobbled, tipped to one side, and crashed into the sea. Darrell was trapped inside a room on the rig. As the rig sank deeper and deeper into the sea the lights went out and the room began to fill with water. Thrashing about in the darkness, Darrel accidentally found a

huge air bubble that was forming in the corner of the room. He thrust his head inside it. Then a horrifying thought sent a shiver down his spine.

"I'm buried alive". Darrell began to pray - out loud - and as he did, something remarkable happened. He said later: "I found myself actually talking to Someone. Jesus was there with me. There was no illumination, nothing physical, but I sensed him, a comforting presence. He was real, he was there."

For the next 22 hours, Presence continued to comfort Darrel. But now the oxygen supply inside the bubble was giving out. Death was inevitable. It was just a matter of time. Then a remarkable thing happened. Darrel saw a tiny star of light shimmering in the pitch-black water. Was it real? Or after 22 hours was he beginning to hallucinate? Darrel squinted his eyes. The light seemed to grow brighter. He squinted again.

He wasn't hallucinating. The light was real. It was coming from a diver's helmet. Someone had found him. His 22-hour nightmare was over. Rescue had come. He was saved.

That true story is a remarkable illustration of what Christmas is all about. Sin had wobbled our world, tipped it to one side, and sent it crashing into the waters of spiritual disaster. Darkness was everywhere. The human race was hopelessly trapped. There was no hope. Humankind was doomed to certain spiritual death.

People turned to God. They prayed, and they waited for the time promised to them - the time of the Messiah, the time of the one who would inherit the throne of David and rule - in peace forever.

Then, when the night seemed darkest, something remarkable happened. A tiny spark of light appeared. An angel spoke to a young woman and told her that she would conceive and bear a son, and that son would be the Son of the Most High God - that he would be the Messiah. Another angel told the man engaged to her that though she was pregnant, that he should go ahead and marry her - that her child was the child of God. The light was dim at first - but its spark could be seen in the cousin of the young woman, who, despite her age and the fact that she had never been able to bear a child before, was suddenly pregnant. The light was dim, but it brightened through the next weeks and months - at least for some who were looking for such a light. It appeared to them as a star in the sky - a

star which they followed in the hope that it would lead them to the birthplace of a great king. But for all the rest the light was still unseen, and even to those who had seen it still could be mistaken for nothing but a dream, the hallucination of a drowning man, a hope based on an illusion.

Finally, on the night that the baby was born and laid in a manger, the light appeared to certain poor shepherds who lay keeping their flocks, and an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them as the angel spoke, and said "Behold, I proclaim to you good news of a great joy, for today in David's city a Saviour has been born for you, He is the Messiah, the Lord you have waited for."

So the nightmare of the human race came to an end. Rescue had come. Jesus, the son of God, had come down from heaven to save the human race, just as the diver had come down to save Darrel Dore.

That is what Christmas is about.

It's about salvation. It's about seeing the light come into the world to deliver us from sin and darkness. It's about God coming to us, and dwelling with us, and rescuing us from death.

This Advent Season come let us adore Him—Christ the Lord—Our Guiding Light.