

No one ever says, "I'm sick of seeing the sunrise." Every morning plenty of people sit out on porches and back decks sipping coffee and watching the sunrise over the horizon. There's something magical about the way the sun comes up over the trees that invites people to watch. The last shades of darkness fade away and the sun just keeps coming, up and up until its casting its rays and its light all over. Thankfully this wonderful moment happens every day like clockwork.

But if you're a second or third shift worker, or you're someone who just likes to catch extra moments of sleep, the dawning of the sun isn't something you look forward to. Then you just want the light to stay away a little longer. But mainly human beings were built for the daytime. We feed off light. When the sun doesn't shine for a couple of days you can tell because some people get grumpy. Our natural spiritual condition is however exactly the opposite. We're more like the second or third shift workers. We don't mind spiritual darkness. It feels better because it's natural to us.

During this Epiphany season we're taking a look at the Power of the Light. Jesus is revealed in the Bible in different places as the Light. This morning in the gospel of Matthew we have another one. Here we see the...

**Dawning of the Light
Proclaims a light giving message
Calls a light giving people**

For a moment there seemed like a small glimmer. In the dark it was easy to see. Light stands out clearly against the darkness. But after a while it was gone. That glimmer of light was John the Baptist. He came into the desert preaching and teaching the people. He pointed them to the coming Messiah. But suddenly he was gone and everything seemed to go dark again. The light he cast was extinguished when he was put into prison. Darkness seemed to reign again.

Even more suddenly the same message John preached was proclaimed again. **"From that time on Jesus began to preach, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."** The same light giving message was back, this time from the lips of Jesus of Nazareth. After John was imprisoned Jesus moved his base of operations to Capernaum along the Sea of Galilee to the north of Jerusalem. It was Gentile territory with pretty much only non-Jews living there. Many wondered what a Jewish preacher was doing in largely Gentile area. Jews looked down on those people. They weren't true Jews. They didn't have the true law. They didn't follow God's laws in order to be saved. So they could never be saved. To Jews this land was in true darkness.

Jesus went right to where it was darkest, where there would be no possible way for the people to save themselves or get right with God on their own. There he let his light shine. His light giving message pierced the darkness. **"Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali...the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned."** Mostly people thought they were getting to heaven because God would accept their trying to live up to the law. He would let their faults go. God would accept them the way they were. But that thinking kept them in their sinful darkness. When Jesus proclaimed a light giving message it was different. It wasn't something they did; it was something God did for them.

We live in the dark. It's not our country or world, it's us. We are darkness because of our sin. We have no way of getting right with God on our own. And this is no accident. We live in it. Every day. Every minute. The darkness of our sin defines us. The darkness gives us cover to think we're getting away with things because no one can see them in the dark. Our sinful darkness convinces us God doesn't mind so long as we don't hurt someone else. Sin makes us think that what goes on in our homes is our business. And the darkness of our hearts of sin just craves more darkness. So we stubbornly stay in the dark. At times we run from the light thinking it will harm us. In the light things won't be as fun, as pleasurable, as happy. We convince ourselves the darkness is better.

Jesus came and the Light dawned. He is the Light. He proclaims a light giving message. **"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near"** That isn't a call for you to do something. It's no task, no burden, no command to live up to. Jesus, the one who brings the kingdom of heaven, is already near. Being right with God isn't something you earn; it's something God earns for you. The Light draws near and proclaims his light giving message. As he does something happens inside you and me. Jesus soaks up our darkness. He absorbs it into himself. He takes all the darkness of all your sins right into himself. Then he gives you his light.

In an instant the light giving message works its way into your heart and changes it. God works total and complete change. That's repentance worked through the message he proclaims. He calls to you to repent because he's already lived obedient to every one of God's commands. God worked repentance is recognizing that you have sinned and wronged God. It's receiving that light giving message. Jesus calls us out of the darkness into his light. Share in the Light of Jesus. Soak in the light he shines on you which eliminates the darkness so you walk in the light.

When the light comes it seems there is no stopping where it penetrates. Light shines into all the little places where it seemed only darkness would be. When Jesus came with his light giving message it pierced its way into the hearts of many. It's even made it into our own dark hearts. By the power of God the darkness of our sins gives way to the light of Christ. And once your heart has been changed and now exists in the light of Christ you're then called to be a light giving people.

Peter and Andrew already knew Jesus. They followed John the Baptist and heard him point to Jesus as the Savior. They believed in him, as did James and John. Now Jesus walked by and issued a permanent call. **“Come, follow me.”** The sacrifice would be great. They’d leave families and good jobs. Yet all four responded the same. **“At once they left their nets and followed him.”** The Light was inviting them to follow. Jesus was calling them to be light giving people.

You have light in your lives because you have Christ’s light giving message of good news. But when opportunities come where we see someone still in the darkness of sin, we weigh our options. Our natural condition is darkness too. We know what it’s like. But we also know getting involved might mean offending them. It probably will be difficult and time consuming. They might ask questions. We figure they’ll probably see the light for themselves, or someone will come along better equipped to share the light with them. Or we guard the light we’ve received expecting that if we spread it around it might break up what we have. Arguments, disagreements, and divisions can all happen when more have the light than just us.

Jesus’ call was one of grace. These disciples weren’t anything special. They weren’t the smartest, most out going, greatest people Jesus could’ve found to invite. Jesus chose them, in love he invited them to follow, and by grace he made them light giving people. I’m not anything special. I’m not the smartest, most out going, greatest person that Jesus could invite and call to be a follower. But Jesus chose me, in love he invited me to follow, and by grace he made me a light giving person. That same grace has him sharing his light and love with you too. Christ wasn’t put off by your darkness. He was attracted to it because he alone could do something about it.

Those who have seen and heard the powerful works of the Savior become light giving people. The powerful works of Christ move you and shine through you until the light of Christ pierces the darkness of people’s hearts and lives. Jesus calls you and invites you by faith to share him with others. Let the light Jesus shared with you shine. You’re called to be a light giving person. Jesus has high expectations because he knows what the light is capable of. He knows it isn’t your abilities, your outgoing personality, or your greatness. It’s the light, its Jesus. When Jesus is shared more feel the light and more hearts are removed from darkness into the light.

Soak up the light of Jesus, and be empowered to reflect that light. Bring the Light that dawned in your life and shines in your heart to someone else. Jesus has proclaimed a light giving message so that you might be a light giving people in him.