

Third Advent 1941

Dec. 14

Luke 1:67-80

LIGHT IN DARKNESS

There is much darkness in the world today. There is something terrifying about physical darkness. No one fancies living in it.

The history of man might well be written from the standpoint of elementary darkness. So science has grappled with the task. Early men learned that fire produced light. When the sun set, firebrands were used. Then oil—then candles—lamps—electric light. What would we do without light?

No one loves darkness—only those who wish to exploit by it. That is why dangers live in darkness—men prowl about seeking to destroy.

We hear of blackouts—we can hardly imagine what that means—and the fear of sudden destruction and death! And yet God is able to use even darkness as a protection.

- I. There is a more devastating darkness than physical darkness. More and more we are reminded of its enveloping power. I am thinking of the mental, moral and spiritual darkness which nullifies the light of God.
 - a. Keen as science may be in its attempt to illuminate darkness—it cannot solve the problem of the darkness of the soul. The minds of men are darkened—they cannot reason their way back to God. And there is moral darkness—no sense of right and wrong. Immorality has plagued man in to a rite of perversion.
--But there is a darkness which envelops men's hearts—spiritual darkness away from God. Almost unbelievable and impenetrable the majority of men and women are without God—the source of light.
Sin has caused a total blackout in the heart of men.
Men love darkness rather than light because their works are evil.
--The past week has been a solemn week for God's people. Mirth has been subdued. A black cloud which has threatened for years has broken and rolls over the whole earth. The globe is in a death struggle. Even as I speak—for each word I speak—a life may be snuffed out. Why?
The sunlight of God has been shut out. The church has not shined out as it ought.
 - b. Truly there is need of a dawn of redeeming grace. Israel was looking for it. We are—all humanity is yearning in its plight for the dawning. Advent is a season of looking forward to the anniversary of the promised coming of the light. Varied as our ideas may be about Christmas—it is to man a visitation from God—of light. That the yuletide season may have a full meaning we must prepare. Surely we do—in decoration, gifts and

edibles—and yet it seems it is hard to get into the spirit—Is there less of Christmas this year.

II. Prepare for the dayspring from on high. That it might visit us. I think we have need of it this year. In his benedictus, Zacharias, filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied of the Blessings which should come in Christ. His son John was to be the herald of that light—a lesser light pointing toward the Christ. John’s life became a symbol of how Christmas at all time ought to prepare Christ’s coming. John’s message was—prepare a way for the Christ. He was to go before the face of the Lord to make ready his ways—How are we to prepare a way—

a. Retreat in quietness.

John retreats to the wilderness. His task called for poise, courage and conviction; such as gained in solitude with God. We will need the same strength in days that lie ahead. This busy turmoil of each day, this confusion and strain drains us of strength. Our overtaxed hours rob us of poise and reverence. We need the quickening strength of solitude. We need to think with God. To be still and know that God reigns.

Take time to reflect, meditate—such experience is a solace to the soul trouble—a balm to the weary heart.

b. Advent also calls for repentance. John’s message was repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

If there is to be a liberation of the heart, if the dayspring is to visit us we will need a fresh approach to sin. But isn’t Lent the time for repentance? Wasn’t it love that brought Christ? Yes but sin inverted that love.

John wanted the way clear for Christ—so he set as a prerogative—repent. Repentance is a way to God. And we have much for which to repent.

c. We are to make ready a highway for Christ into the hearts of men. How? Yes there is a way. Doesn’t it seem that you can get into the Christmas spirit? Begin preparing a way for Christ in the hearts of others.

There are many hills that can be leveled, many obstacles in the lives of men that need to be lifted—many valleys need filling, in the lonely, the impoverished. Seek out some burdened heart, some anxious one—there’ll be many—and prepare a way for Christ. Couldn’t you think of that as service? I know you’ll have a blessed Christmas.

There’ll be many gifts this Christmas—but you seek out one who doesn’t get—cards to some who sit in darkness and loneliness. Yes with John we have a message for all—we can give knowledge of salvation in the removing of sin.

III. That dayspring from on high will visit us—light will shine in our hearts. We are heralds of a better day. War, trials, clouds may come. All light may seem extinguished—but not us. John’s message has come true—Christ came. So we may experience that light.

a. In the removing of sins.

b. Light in darkness and shadow of death.

c. Our feet shall be guided in the way of peace. The world may be in turmoil of war—but in the heart of a believer may reign that tranquility of heart. All this because of the tender mercies of our God.

Oh yes, there is much in store for you—if you will open your heart to God’s blessings.

Do you need that dayspring?

Is your heart heavy and cold and dark?

Open up your heart to the grace of God?

Join with Zacharias.

(Read) Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel. For He hath visited and sought redemption for his people. He hath saved us from our spiritual enemies. He has remembered his covenant with us. We will serve Him in holiness and righteousness all our day.

And when the fine dayspring of Eternity has come, we shall take up again the Benedictus because God has visited us with his love.