

Lessons for Third Sunday after the Epiphany **January 22, 2023**

Psalm 27:1-9(10-14) ~ *David trusted confidently in the Lord to deliver him from his enemies.*

Isaiah 9:1-4 ~ *God will give light and liberty to those in the bondage of darkness.*

1 Corinthians 1:10-18 ~ *We are united by the saving power of Christ's cross.*

Matthew 4:12-25 ~ *The light of salvation shines in Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: The Circle of Light

In "The Magician's Nephew," C.S. Lewis wrote about the creation: "One moment there had been nothing but darkness; next moment a thousand, thousand points of light leaped out..." Today's lessons speak of one bright point of light that encircles the nations through the ministry and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Isaiah anticipated the time when the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali would be set free from the darkness of Assyrian oppression. St. Paul urged the Corinthian church to recognize the freedom from the darkness of dissension that Christ has provided us through our Baptism. The light of salvation burst upon sin-darkened humanity as Jesus went throughout Galilee teaching, preaching, and healing.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Light of the World. Help me always walk in your light, living out the freedom from sin and death that you have given me as I express the forgiveness and unity that is mine through your sacrifice. Let the light of faith shine in my life so that others will be drawn to your glory. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: God has called us out of daily routines and away from personal allegiances that entangle us. He has blessed our work and our relationships so that both income and family can be opportunities to serve Him by meeting the needs of those around us who are suffering and sorrowing, as we proclaim the dawn of Christ's Kingdom of Grace.

OFFERING PRAYER: Lord, You have called us to lay down the nets of toil that tangle us, and walk away; to follow in Your Kingdom way that lets us preach the dawning of this brand new day! Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: God's day of redemption has dawned in Christ! The bright light of freedom from sin and death breaks forth in our lives just as it did for those first disciples who heard Jesus' call to become fishers of men. We, too, have been enlisted in the proclamation of God's Kingdom! When our daily routine makes us indifferent to the task or when our personal allegiances overcast the new dawn with dark clouds of division and quarreling, we leave ourselves bound in a land of deep spiritual darkness. Thanks be to God, the power of Jesus' death on the cross sweeps away the gloom and gives us courage to greet the new day and announce it with joy!

Questions to Consider: Have you ever felt you were looking for light at the end of a tunnel?

- How did God through Isaiah describe the breaking of Assyrian oppression?
- What in Paul's writing may be compared to the deep darkness of Isaiah's passage?
- Why was the land of Zebulun and Naphtali a good place for Jesus to start his ministry?
- What kind of light can we bring to the problem of division in the body of Christ?

Bonus on next page: The resurrection of Jesus is the dawn of a new day.

Early Morning Son Rise

He said that he would rise again; but who would have believed it? Who, indeed, would think that death, so cruelly strong and proud just two short days before, could be brought low and sink beneath the dark horizon left when Christ, the Son of God, was laid inside the tomb? His friends who watched him die would not have priced the cost of sin that high. Now in their gloom and grief they all forgot that he had said: "I am the Resurrection and the Life."
They only knew their dearest friend was dead; their hearts were hopeless, ransacked by the strife.
But this would be God's gracious, great surprise: before the break of dawn the Son would rise!

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