

“LITTLE LARRY AND THE LIGHT!”

Sermon Text – John 8:12
Saturday & Sunday, October 20 & 21, 2017
20th Sunday a. Pentecost
Mission Sunday
Zion Lutheran Church, Beecher, IL
Old Testament Reading – Isaiah 42:5-7
Epistle Reading – 2 Peter 2:9-10
Gospel Reading – John 8:3-12

[Note: You may also view the sermon being preached at our Sunday service. Click on this link to view it: <https://youtu.be/qUguTZgkqoI> The YouTube version is significantly different from what is shown below.]

In the name of Jesus. [Amen.] Our sermon is based on the Gospel reading read earlier. I'll read this portion again: **Again, Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”** (John 8:12, ESV)

Dear friends in Christ Jesus,

There was a little boy named Larry. His dad was also named Larry... so the younger one was naturally called “Little Larry.”

When Little Larry got tall enough to reach the light switches in the house his parents would ask him to turn off the light switch as was needed in their home. Little Larry liked doing that. He enjoyed the praise & attention that he received.

One evening, Little Larry walked by a room and noticed that the light was on. He reached up and turned the switch off. Immediately he heard his dad... Big Larry... call out! You see... Big Larry was in the room... reading the newspaper! In no uncertain words, his dad let the boy know that he shouldn't do that again!

But... in spite of getting yelled at... Little Larry thought that was pretty funny. He found that he received even more attention by turning the lights *out* on someone... than by turning them *on*!

Soon, Little Larry prowled the house looking for the chance to sneak in and turn off the lights on someone! He turned the basement light off on his mom... when she was doing the laundry. Once he reached into the bathroom... and turned out the light on his big brother while he was taking a shower. He thought it so funny... to hear his brother calling for help in the dark bathroom while stuck in the shower!

And every time Little Larry did that... he got the same response: **“Turn on the light!”**

<Pause>

Little Larry loved to turn the lights *off* on people... but God loves to turn them *on*! God loves to enlighten the lives of the people living in this world who live in the darkness of *not* knowing Him.

1. When God was creating the world, He first said: **“Let there be light...”** (Gen. 1:3, *ESV*) and *instantly*... there was light!
2. As the Israelites left Egypt and were making their way to the promised land, God sent a pillar of light to guide them as they traveled in the dark of night.
3. And... when God called Saul to faith in Jesus... He first blinded Saul's eyes to prepare Saul to see the Light of the Gospel for the first time! God renamed Saul to be Paul... and then sent Paul into the world... to tell others of God's love & forgiveness found *only* in Jesus Christ.

Truly... *even more* than did Little Larry... God loves to turn the light *on!*

And... this is *exactly* what this world needs! Pay attention to the news... & you'll see what I mean. You'll see the darkness of sin enveloping... blackening... destroying the lives of countless people all over the world!

That's true even in our own communities! Robbery... deceit... corruption... murder... abuse of others. The darkness of sin is *everywhere*... isn't it?

It even invades our own homes. Marriages get rocky & sometimes destroyed. Selfishness rules in the home... rather than the love of God. It's true... that dark invader of sin constantly looks for a chance to chase the Light of God's love out of our homes & lives.

Should we be surprised at this? No! Jesus, Himself, once said: **"...men loved darkness instead of light."** (John 3:19, ESV)

Sin seems to have a "magnetic pull" on people – even on Christians! It constantly seeks to draw us to *sample* it... to *try* it... to *walk* in its darkness.

And... walking in darkness can be deadly. The following describes being in a dark mine, deep underground:

"It's pitch black. Water drips and the boards used to shore up the walls creak. Total darkness envelopes you. Disorientation happens and the person has trouble keeping balance. Danger is everywhere. There are side shafts & tunnels in which a person can be hopelessly lost and they must avoid dangerous pitfalls... which... if fallen into... could result in a fall of several hundred feet through darkness to one's death!"

Couldn't that description fit our world today? Spiritually speaking... we also need a light to guide us through the darkness of sin & unbelief in this world.

<Pause>

God gave that Light in His Son, Jesus.

One day, during the Feast of the Tabernacles, Jesus said something that HAD to be incredibly confusing to those with Him. According to the custom for this festival... four large candelabras were lit. The glow from all the candles could be seen over the whole city.

The purpose of this was to remind the people of the pillar of fire that God used to guide them to the Promised Land after they left slavery in Egypt. To those who were standing nearby, Jesus said: **"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."**

With those words, Jesus announced Himself as the Light sent by God to lead all people through the darkness of this fallen world.

- His job is to restore the light of God's love into a world.
- His job is to protect us from the pitfalls dug by the devil which would cause us to fall head-first into the depths of hell!
- His job... **as the Light of the world**... is to lead all people through the dark, dangerous, wilderness of this sinful world to the Promised Land of heaven!

Through Jesus' suffering and death on the cross... He brought life & light to all who would repent... believe in... & follow Him. Those blessed ones... will **"never walk in darkness, but have the light of life."**

Now... under the cross of Christ... the healing light of God's love pours down on us... enabling us... to share it with others.

At times we think that the job is simply too big. How can we do anything of consequence to help anyone else?

A number of years ago a large office building in downtown Chicago was put in the dark during an electrical brownout. People scurried about looking for a flashlight so they could safely find their way out of the building. But there was no flashlight to be found – *anywhere!*

Finally... a woman went into a rarely used storeroom and found a single candle. She said: **"Here... I've found a candle! Let's light it so we can see where we're going!"**

To that a cynical person said: **"How's one candle going to help? We have a whole building to evacuate! Throw it away!"**

Fortunately, the woman didn't throw the candle away. Instead... she lit it. And... with the light from that one candle... they found case after case of candles! Using these hundreds of candles... all the people in the building got out safely!

What can one person do? Remember the candlelight services that we have each Christmas Eve. From the light of one candle... the entire congregation – *in just a few minutes* – is enveloped in gorgeous light!

Likewise... each one of us... can *still* be used by God to spread His message of love & forgiveness found in His Son, Jesus... the Light of the world.

Yeah... at times it looks like a wasted, futile effort to tell others of Christ. But remember that it's *God's* job to bless our efforts. It's *His* job to define what's successful and what *isn't*. Our job is to be diligent, faithful workers telling others how God has **"turned our darkness into light"** and how God also wants to turn *their* **"darkness into light"** as well.

There are plenty of opportunities for each of us to let the Light of Jesus Christ shine through! Each Saturday evening... or Sunday morning... is an opportunity to invite others... to come encounter Jesus with us who is **"the Light of Life."**

You can pray for our missionaries scattered throughout the world... asking God to bless their efforts as they **"proclaim the excellencies of Him... who calls people out of the darkness of sin... into [God's] marvelous light."** (1 Pet. 2:9, paraphrased)

<Pause>

Little Larry enjoyed turning the lights off on people in his home. He enjoyed the attention he received. But what he did... did no one any good *at all*.

Martin Luther called Christians... "Little Christs." As a Little Christ... each of us can do the *opposite* of Little Larry. Equipped by the Holy Spirit we can turn ON the Light of the world in their lives. We can help people... from right across the street... to the most remote section in Siberia... to be released from the **"dungeon of darkness"** where Christ is not yet known!

In Jesus' name... and for His sake! [Amen.]