

FEBRUARY 18, 2024 FPC PORTHURON, PASTOR ROXIE DAVIS, SCRIPTURE: John 8: 12-15; I John 1: 5-10

(John 1: 1-9). SERMON: THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

JOKES ABOUT SUPER BOWL before the reading of Scripture because I had used so many examples of football in the Newsletter and previous Sermons. And in honor of Joe Manatrey, the comedian who will become a new member in this congregation today.

Now I can kind of relate to this joke's scenario because you all know how much I know about football (not much) but I have used football frequently recently as sermon and newsletter examples. In fact, one of my friends in this congregation gave me this football cookie as a little sweet reminder of how much I have talked about football. Just trying to humor me. Here is the joke: A guy take his new girlfriend to the Super Bowl Game. Imagine it is Bill and I. They have great seats right behind their team's bench. (Well, that doesn't fit for Bill and me—we would be up in the nose-bleed bleachers). After the game, he asks her how she liked the game. "Oh, I really liked it," especially the big guys with lots of muscles and especially the kickers who look like ballerinas. But I just couldn't understand why they were trying to kill each other over 25 cents." Dumbfounded, the guy asks, "What do you mean?" "Well, they flipped a coin, one team got it and then for the rest of the game, all they kept screaming was..." "Get the quarterback! Get the quarterback!" I'm like Hellooooooo? It's only 25 cents!"

PREACHING SERIES

As you know, we are in a Preaching Series, "Light in our Darkness." We have explored God's first light and last light found in Genesis and Revelation, in the Bible. We have seen our kids express "the Light of Love" in a Valentine Play.

And now we will look closely at Jesus Christ, claiming to be the Light of the World. Next week, I will be here but Pastor Randy Bennett, an at-large pastor (not a large pastor) in the Port Huron Area will preach, He will tell of his experiences in the jail ministry where he and others try to bring Light into a Dark Place.

DARKNESS

It has sometimes been said that "Chaos" Confusion, Turmoil, and Discord can erupt from the darkness of sin.

OR some Evil Act can bring on the darkness of Chaos, Confusion, Turmoil, and Discord. Sometimes Darkness can mean Evil, Sin, Lack of being able to see, or feel goodness—or sense any light in the situation we find ourselves. Just go down that hole of depression, which some of us have experienced, And you know what I am talking about. It is dark. It is very dark. Just this past week the news highlighted two mass

shootings—one in Joel Osteen’s Megachurch in Houston and the mass shooting at the parade celebrating the Kansas City Chiefs Superbowl Win. The shooting at the Mega Church was born out of the evil plodding of a woman with a rifle. The shootings at the parade which left one dead and 22 injured (half of them children)—That dark act began in the sin of anger, between two teenagers—who had guns--Anger out of control which brought on the darkness of chaos and death and injury to so many.

SCRIPTURES FOR TODAY

With the background of that darkness, I speak today about the Light of Christ—In a very dark world. (I didn’t even mention to you the international darkness). As I said, chaos can be a form of darkness. We don’t know where we are. We are confused. Let me explain. Now the chaos that I am going to describe is **nothing, in fact you might find it humorous compared to the terrorizing chaos at the Super Bowl Parade.** Perhaps I tell this simple story of chaos so that we can perhaps chuckle a bit, to release the stress and tension of living in such a dark time in our history.

MIX UP—BACKSTORY CLASS

The Scripture for today—The original scriptures were the Gospel of John Chapter 8--early in the New Testament and First John 1 in the latter part of the New Testament. The confusion and chaos came when I realized in the Backstory Adult Class on Thursdays—that the Contemporary 8:30 Worship Bulletin had the original scriptures but the Traditional Worship bulletin had John 8 and John 1 (both from the Gospel of John). The First in First John 1 was left out. The Backstory students had read the two chapters in the Gospel of John. And of course, I was prepared to teach on John 8 and First John 1. It was a bit comical and confusing. However, when we discovered the mistake, we all agreed that the Gospel John, Chapter 1 amazingly fit right into the theme of The Light of Christ.

My point in all of this, is to say: Sometimes when chaos—confusion—Darkness—is in our lives, God’s light is constantly trying to break in and give us, amazingly, MORE light in our darkness. Whether it is as simple as a mistake in a bulletin or as terrifying as a life altering event, God is constantly trying to break in and Shine some light—no, to shine His light into and around and through the circumstances that confront us. The purpose of God’s Light?

To show us a way through our circumstances, by following God’s Light in Jesus Christ. With that in mind, I want to read to you the Gospel of John Chapter 1, verse 1-9, so you can see how It ties into the original Scriptures that we read this morning. I read from the **Gospel of John 1: 1-9** “In the beginning was the Word, (Word refers to God’s Son, Jesus) and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through Him, and without Him not one thing

came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in Him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John (John the Baptist). ⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world." And it was Jesus Christ. Now we read earlier this morning John 8: where Jesus says, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." And in 1 John, which we read, it says, "God is light and in him there is no darkness at all." If you are now totally baffled and confused by all this Biblical explanations, I will give my pitch for you to be in one of the Bible Adult Classes—Every Thursday at 10:00 for the Backstory Class. And every Fourth Sunday at 11: 20 is the BIBLE 101 Class (Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth) If you think that you have just experienced a commercial, you have. But let's be honest, most commercials show some confusion at the beginning and then they zing you with a solution. Realize that you have just been zinged.

NOW ON WITH THE SERMON

"The Light of Christ" I think all three Scriptures speak to the darkness and how God's light—through Jesus Christ—responds to the darkness around us—By bringing life and light and love into our circumstances.

And sometimes we are totally unaware of God's light that is trying to break into our lives. It says in I John 1:6

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him (Jesus) while we are walking in the darkness (our own sin), we lie and do not do what is true; But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin."

LENTEN SEASON

As we move into the Lenten Season (40 days), we are moving on a journey to the cross and the resurrection which brings us this year to the last Sunday in March. We find Lent to be a time when we have an opportunity to examine our own sins—becoming very Introspective about our own shortcomings—We are encouraged to take some time to look at the bad habits we continue to harbor, which are opposed to God's will and often shun God's light. Perhaps those constant sins or bad habits create darkness in us or in the situations around us. Ash Wednesday—the beginning of the Lenten Season, happened last Wednesday, Some of our brothers and sisters in the faith, wear ashes on their foreheads or their hands on that day. Ashes are a sign of Repentance and Renewal, Recognizing the darkness In our lives and Resetting our lives towards the Light of Christ—the One who is on the cross—speaking forgiveness. Resetting our lives

towards the Light of Christ—the One who is risen from the dead, as a sign of God’s saving love for all humanity. We are in the Season of Lent—40 days, not counting Sundays, to look at the darkness in our lives And the darkness in the world—to which we may be contributing. During Lent, we get a chance to move closer to the Light of Christ, by Resetting our lives towards that Light.

GIVING UP SOMETHING

Often Lent is associated with giving something up, as a way to deny ourselves of worldly pleasures, recognizing the agony that Christ went through on the Cross. My go-to-give up something was always M and M’s candies and Donuts—my favorite sweets. But today I challenge each of us to think differently about giving up something for Lent. I encourage all of us to “give up” something that keeps us from forgiving or loving others. Think of a person you hold a grudge or anger or resentment or judgment or harsh words or hostility against And I invite you to forgive that person. Now I know, as well as you know, forgiveness is the hardest part of love. But it cracks open the light that God so wants to pour on us. I believe, that forgiveness can bring a whole lot of light into the darkness of our lives and into the darkness of our relationships, as it says in 1 Peter 4:8 “Above all else, be constant in your love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins.”

FERMENTING FAITH

The night before Ash Wednesday, Madi Gra, we call it Fermenting Faith—there were 20 of us who gathered at the Vintage Tavern to eat and talk together. It was our last fling before the beginning of Lent on the next day, Ash Wednesday. Before we ate, Matt Lozen did a talk, to ferment our faith. Matt challenged all of us to think about what we will give up for Lent. When you see Matt, he may ask you, as he asked us, what are giving up for Lent? But now perhaps he will frame the question differently, asking How’s it going with your forgiveness and giving up what stands in the way of that forgiveness. **PLATO** In the words of Plato, an Ancient Greek Philosopher, He says: “We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; The real tragedy of life is when grown ups are afraid of the right.” May we not be fearful of God’s bright light. Through our forgiveness and our love, May our boldness reflect Christ’s light **In** our lives and **on** the lives of others, God has chosen people like us, His Church, to shine His light in this present Darkness. **May we take up the torch of God.**