

New Light

Scripture: Isaiah 42:10 – 16

Jan. 5th, 2025

Epiphany Sunday

Today is Epiphany Sunday, the day which commemorates the event described in our Hymn of Praise ‘We Three Kings’. We remember when the gentile wisemen visited the child Jesus. Yet they were not kings, they were from the Far East.

They had three gifts and our carol ‘We Three Kings’ considered each gift. The gifts were gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The gifts symbolized Jesus’ mission.

*Gold symbolized Jesus’ role as king.

*Frankincense which when combined with other incenses was burned in the temple and it speaks about Jesus deity.

*Myrrh was used to embalm dead bodies and this gift gives us pause to remember Jesus death.

The expression ‘the light at the end of the tunnel’ dates back to the 1800’s. It started during the railroad age of Western Expansion in USA. Many tunnels were built for the railroads and the expression – ‘the light at the end of the tunnel’ came about. But the expression became widespread only in the mid-1900s.

We use this metaphor without even thinking about it because it quickly and easily conveys an idea that apparently everyone understands.

Boy, I think that is true – the expression ‘the light at the end of the tunnel’ is an expression I do understand. How about you, do you understand the expression – ‘the light at the end of a tunnel’?

We all have been at some dark places in our lives. We all have been on a desolate road and we have felt an immense relief on seeing a glimmer of light, even though it might still have been off in the distance.

While helping my son Josh move from Salt Lake City, Utah to Columbus, Ohio we traveled on Interstate 80 for 10 hours. We entered Nebraska at dusk. I can not tell how much I wanted to see some kind of light off in the distance as we travel on Interstate 80. It seemed to me that we were in the middle of complete darkness with only the headlights of our two cars and the occasional lights of on coming traffic. I so much wanted to see light at the end of the tunnel! I did see some lit road signs and some lights along the highway but when I looked left and right, I saw total darkness! During our 5th hour of travel through Nebraska, I did see light at the end of the tunnel when light from Omaha, Nebraska appeared off in the distance.

And I think we also have been in some life situations when everything seemed depressingly dark. Something in our life had turned terrible and dark, but yet we find strength to continue on when we realize that there is a light at the end of the tunnel of darkness. Oh, our light may not have come quickly, but it came never less! A solution to a problem occurred!

Think of a life situation you have been in. Some situations have been dark and desolate occurrences. We have all felt the loss of a loved one, the pain of grief life delivers, and the anguish of personal relationships that have gone bad. Oh yes, I think we all have been there! But yet in Christ we find the strength to continue on into the future. We know that in Christ there is a solution to our problems.

A true life story that a pastor encountered which showed him a light at the end of a dark tunnel - a man had suffered a severe

heart attack in the end of November. The original diagnosis was that there was very little chance of his recovery because his brain was denied oxygen for almost one hour. The pastor saw this man on Nov. 27th and from what the pastor encountered, he saw little hope.

The man laid on his back in bed with bandages all over his face. The pastor decided to just say a prayer with his father and mother and ask God for a miracle or safe passage for him to the heavens above.

The pastor left the hospital that day very sad. After the pastor received news the man had made a turn for the better, the pastor journeyed to the hospital to see him again.

What the pastor witnessed was a miracle! The man was lying in bed with eyes open. He could not speak because of tubes in his mouth but his head turned toward the pastor when he came towards his bed.

The pastor told the man the story of Lazarus. He told him how Jesus went to the tomb and called out to Lazarus – ‘Lazarus, come out!’ and Lazarus came out of the tomb. He then told him that in many ways Christ had called out to the man calling him out. The man’s eyes filled with tears and the pastor held his hand and said a closing prayer.

As they prayed, the man squeezed the pastor’s hand. The man had seen the light at the end of a dark tunnel! He had seen a new light! The pastor prayed that the man’s recovery continues, but he knew there will be rough patches ahead for him. There will be more dark tunnels for the man and his family to go through, but there is light at the end of the tunnel!

Humankind has bumbled and fumbled its way through history. There has been much darkness in human history. There has been long stretches of desolation and fear in human history. How were the people able to go on? Maybe it was because they kept catching a glimpse of the light at the end of the tunnel. Maybe they found strength in the hope. Maybe they found the promise of a covenant with God that would lead them to a new light.

As we continue our journey into this New Year, it is good to remember the long stretch of human history that was darkness. The long stretch of human history where there was no new light.

*Only then can we really understand how vitally important is the promise of a Messiah.

*Only then can we really understand how important the promise of a new light is.

*Only then can we really understand who would turn darkness into light.

Where does our new light come from – Jesus Christ – he will turn the darkness into light and the rough places into level ground.

So what should we do with this news of Jesus Christ, the One who turns darkness into light and who makes rough places into level ground? Let us answer this question with the sharing of #167 – ‘Go Tell It on the Mountain’

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, may your spirit help us live our lives in gratitude for your Son giving his life for us.

And Gracious God, when we feel the darkness closing in on us, help us to recognize that even the faintest bit of brightness off in the distance is the Light of your Presence. AMEN.