

**Today's Sermon**  
**Pastor James York**  
*Jesus is the Light that Disperses Our Darkness*  
**Advent; Restore us God**  
**Luke 2:9-11, Psalm 89, Isaiah 9,**  
**John 1:5, Psalm 23**  
**November 27, 2011**

On Sunday afternoon, June 1st 1975, Darrel Dore was on an oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico. Suddenly it wobbled, tipped to one side, and crashed into the sea. Darrell was trapped inside a room on the rig. As the rig sank deeper and deeper into the sea the lights went out and the room began to fill with water. Thrashing about in the darkness, Darrel accidentally found a huge air bubble that was forming in the corner of the room. He thrust his head inside it. Then a horrifying thought sent a shiver down his spine. "I'm buried alive". Darrell began to pray - out loud -and as he did, something remarkable happened. He said later: "I found myself actually talking to Someone. Jesus was there with me. There was no illumination, nothing physical, but I sensed him, a comforting presence. He was real, he was there." For the next 22 hours that Presence continued to comfort Darrel. But now the oxygen supply inside the bubble was giving out. Death was inevitable. It was just a matter of time. Then a remarkable thing happened. Darrel saw a tiny star of light shimmering in the pitch-black water. Was it real? Or after 22 hours was he beginning to hallucinate? Darrel squinted his eyes. The light seemed to grow brighter. He squinted again. He wasn't hallucinating. The light was real. It was coming from a diver's helmet. Someone had found him. His 22 hour nightmare was over. Rescue had come. He was saved.

Darrel's story reveals aspects of Advent. Pastor Richard Fairchild preached. "Sin had wobbled our world, tipped it to one side, and sent it crashing into the waters of spiritual disaster. Darkness was everywhere. The human race was hopelessly trapped. There was no hope. Humankind was doomed to certain spiritual death. ...

When the night seemed darkest, something remarkable happened. A tiny spark of light appeared. An angel spoke to a young woman and told her that she would conceive and bear a son, and that son would be the Son of the Most High God - that he would be the Messiah. Another angel told the man engaged to her that though she was pregnant, that he should go ahead and marry her - that her child was the child of God.

The light was dim at first - but its spark could be seen in the cousin of the young woman, who, despite her age and the fact that she had never been able to bear a child before, was suddenly pregnant. The light was dim - but it brightened through the next weeks and months - at least for some who were looking for such a light. It appeared to them as a star in the sky - a star which they followed in the hope that it would lead them to the birthplace of a great king. But for all the rest the light was still unseen, and even to those who had seen it, it still could be mistaken for nothing but a dream, the hallucination of a drowning man, a hope based on an illusion.”

Finally, in the darkness of night. **Luke 2:9-11** “**Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiant light of the Lord’s glory surround them. They were terribly frightened, but the angel reassured them. Don’t be afraid!**” he said. **“I bring you good news of great joy for everyone! The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, has been born tonight in Bethlehem, the city of David!**

And so their dark nightmare was dispersed, with God’s radiant, saving light. Rescue had come. Jesus, the son of God, had come down from heaven to save them and all people, sort of like the diver had come down to save Darrel.

Pastor Richard continued, "That is what Christmas is about. Its about salvation, its about seeing the light come into the world to deliver us from sin and darkness, its about God coming to us, and dwelling with us, and rescuing us.”

The prophet Isaiah proclaims. **Isaiah 9: Select Verses** “**Nevertheless darkness and despair will not go on forever. There will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light—a light that will shine on all who live in the land where death casts its shadow. Those who lived in a land of deep darkness, on them light have shined. For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. These will be his royal titles: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

Everywhere Jesus went he dispersed the darkness. All the betrayal, hatred, sin, pain and ugliness of the world from the beginning to the end of time weighed on Jesus on the cross. It caused the noon day to become pitch dark. Jesus resurrection shattered all the darkness and ushered in the eternal radiant light of Easter.

All of these are true and inspiring stories. However until you are restored by God, until your darkness is dispersed by God’s light, you remain unaware of the transformational power of God’s light. Advent acknowledges the darkness and longs for the light of Christmas.

At first the psalmist knew just the story of God restoring people which inspired the psalmist to sing of God’s love. **Psalms 89:1-2** “**Your love, God, is my song, and I’ll sing it! I’m forever telling everyone how faithful you are. I’ll never quit telling the story of your love—how you built the cosmos and guaranteed everything in it. Your love has always been our lives’ foundation; your fidelity has been the roof over our**

**world.”** The psalmist continues for 37 verses. It would take 5 minutes to hear the psalmist describe God’s love.

Later the psalmist’s life wobbled, tipped and crashed into darkness. The psalmist knew the stories of God’s love yet because the psalmist had not personally experienced God’s light the psalmist was overwhelmed, drowning, frantic to breathe, yearning for a glimmer of light. In my mind I do not believe that God ever thrusts us into darkness however when I am in darkness my heart often blames God, like the psalmist who groaned. **Psalm 89:37-50 “38-52 But God, you did walk off and leave us, you lost your temper with the one you anointed. You tore up the promise you made to your servant, you stomped his crown in the mud. You blasted his home to kingdom come, reduced his city to a pile of rubble. Picked clean by wayfaring strangers, a joke to all the neighbors. You declared a holiday for all his enemies, and they're celebrating for all they're worth. Angry, you opposed him in battle, refused to fight on his side; you robbed him of his splendor, humiliated this warrior, ground his kingly honor in the dirt. You took the best years of his life and left him an impotent, ruined husk. How long do we put up with this, God? Are you gone for good? Will you hold this grudge forever? Remember my sorrow and how short life is. Did you create men and women for nothing but this? We'll see death soon enough. Everyone does. And there's no back door out of hell. So where is the love you're so famous for, Lord? What happened to your promise to David? Take a good look at your servant, dear Lord; I'm the butt of the jokes of all nations, The taunting jokes of your enemies, God, as they dog the steps of your dear anointed.”**

The psalmist overwhelmed by darkness let God have it for all that is wrong with the world and their life. I hope you are not overwhelmed by darkness today. I hope you can enjoy God by preparing for Jesus, serving God and all people, loving God and all people. In essence I hope that you are able to climb up and enjoy the splendor of Christmas. However, the miraculous, transformational love of Christmas is revealed in God who comes all the way to us and disperses our darkness with eternal, radiant light. This is not a fairy tale, sticky-sweet, unrealistic love; this is a relationship that will be tested by daunting obstacles, depressing darkness but which will be restored and illumined because of the gracious, faithful, love of God.

Perhaps your life has wobbled, tipped and crashed into darkness. Maybe you just can’t get ahead. The car needs repair again, the house needs fixing, the bills keep coming. Perhaps your health is failing, you ache and hurt. Maybe your job is agonizing. Maybe you can’t find a job. Perhaps you are bombarded with negativity and complaints. Maybe your marriage has fallen apart. Perhaps you are miserable by grief. Maybe you just keep losing. Perhaps stress has engulfed you. Maybe you are depressed. Perhaps you look out at the world and only see fighting, scarcity, problems, scandals, misery. Maybe you are exhausted. Perhaps you are so frustrated, you try so hard but can’t achieve that allusive need. Maybe your relationship with a parent, a child, a friend is sour, draining,

demoralizing. Perhaps you are stuck, trapped. Maybe you are overwhelmed as a caregiver. Perhaps you are tormented by guilt over something you have done, a mistake you can't let go, a love lost. Maybe your life has fallen apart because you messed up, you are unable to forgive, you hurt someone you love and no matter how hard you try you can't fix it. Perhaps drudgery and monotony are dragging you down. Maybe your life has spiraled to the point where you don't ever even want to get out of bed. Perhaps your darkness is something else entirely. You are with Darrel, with the psalmist gasping for breath, for life, for light.

Jesus came to disperse all darkness, desperation and helplessness. This advent Jesus is coming again to you to disperse your darkness and fill your life with light so you can see the glory of Christmas, to fill your lungs with air so you can breathe deep of peace, joy, love and abundant eternal life. The gospel of John proclaims **John 1:5 The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome Jesus. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish Jesus.**"

Scripture over and over declares how God is restoring us. No matter how lost you are, Jesus will find you. No matter how broken you are, Jesus will resurrect you, no matter how far gone you are, Jesus will bring you back. Even if you have lost everything and can do nothing Jesus will save you. That's the miracle of Christmas. Christmas is not just some story that happened over 2,000 years ago. Christmas is Emmanuel, God with you today, God dispersing your darkness right now.

How will Jesus illumine your life? Sophy Burnham wrote, "The mystery comes as the [light] that hovers at the corner of our eye, and when we turn to look—it has vanished though beckoning to our hearts. ... How is it seen? Sometimes it comes like a clap of thunder, as to St. Paul, blinded by the light. Sometimes it enters slowly into consciousness like mist, seeping into you over the course of a lifetime. Or perhaps it comes as an angel's touch: invisible hands ... as vision, a series of miraculous small coincidences that cannot be ignored." God's light will come. God will restore us.

Jesus is born in each of us in a unique way. Jesus knows you. Jesus loves you. Jesus will shine distinct light into you to disperse your specific darkness. Jesus will restore you. This is part of the mystery of the incarnation. This is the glory of Christmas.

The 23rd psalm describes God's darkness dispersing light as a shepherd who provides our every need. The darkness of hunger is dispersed with the satisfying light of green pastures. The darkness of thirst is dispersed with the quenching, refreshing light of still waters. God restores our soul. The darkness of confusion, disorientation, being lost is dispersed with the light of right paths. Even when you find yourself in the darkest valley, the valley of death, God's light will shine through with God's comforting, rescuing presence. When you are all alone, abandoned, betrayed and surrounded by enemies; God will provide the light of a table of healed relationships, of reunion, of fellowship. When you are empty, spent, and lifeless; God will provide the light of anointing, an overflowing cup of energy and abundant life. God will disperse your darkness. God will restore your

soul. Goodness and mercy will shine from you. Radiant you will dwell in the house of the Lord your whole life long.

This advent if you are able to celebrate Jesus, the light, great; If you have energy and desire to prepare for the light, wonderful; If you can sing of God's light, super; If you can share God's light, awesome. If you, like the author of the 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm, can describe how God is restoring your soul, brilliant. However if you are in the dark, if you can do absolutely nothing to save yourself, Jesus, the light of the world is coming to you to disperse your darkness and save you.

The author of the wordy 89th psalm, after groaning about all their darkness, concluded their psalm with just one verse. **Psalm 89:51 "Blessed by God forever and always! Yes. Oh, yes."** Maybe God's light was so wonderfully restoring that it left them almost speechless. Maybe God's light was so mysterious it couldn't be explained. Maybe God's light was too personal to describe. Maybe God's light, at the time of the psalm, was just a glimmer in the pitch black, not yet fully experienced. Maybe the psalmist realized that until you have your darkness dispersed by God's light the glory and timing of the restoration cannot be communicated. If you are there, fine. God is certainly present in all of those advent scenes. However if you are in the depth of your darkness, if you have lost all hope, if you are sure death is imminent, if you can do nothing to save yourself then know that Jesus the light of the world, the light that will disperse your darkness, is coming to you. Jesus will save you. Jesus will restore you. Amen

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