The Christmas Light

John 12:46 / Dr. Marty Baker / December 14, 2005

 It’s Christmas at the Creek. Don’t forget next Wednesday we are going to have a service with carols, candles and communion. Mark your calendars.

 One of my favorites things about the holiday season is the beautiful Christmas lights. When I was a kid, my Dad had the most lights in the neighborhood. We were the house that had people driving by looking at the lights. We had nativity scenes, toy soldiers, and even Santa on the roof. These days I enjoy looking at the lights on other people’s houses and not necessarily on my own.

 This year Patty has been prodding me to put up lights. It’s my neighbor’s fault. The people who bought our house across the street have lights, snowmen and all that stuff on our old house. When they put up their decorations, it made me feel a little like the Grinch, so I gave into the pressure and now we have a few lights on the bushes and wreaths hanging on the windows and it feels a little more like Christmas time.

 December 21st is the winter solstice which is the longest night of the year and the shortest time of daylight in the year. It’s interesting when we’re in the darkest part of the year, Christmas pierces the darkness with light.

 Lights were important in the first Christmas. The angels did the dazzling light show in the sky and the shepherds went to Bethlehem as a result and saw the baby Jesus. The wise men saw another bright light in the sky, a star, and they followed it to the Savior.

 Light is a major theme in the Bible. The Bible says in 1 John:

I John 1:5

... God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

The very first command that God gave in creation was, “Let there be light.” Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.” This is the very reason for Christmas.

John 12:46

I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

 He’s not talking about physical darkness here. He’s talking about personal darkness.

 Everybody has dark days. There are times when you do not feel like getting out of bed. You are afraid to face the world. You don’t feel like it’s worth the effort. You just want to throw in the towel. We all go through dark days.... dark periods in our lives when we wonder where God is. At times it seems as if all of our plans and dreams take a turn in the wrong direction. We find ourselves groping through the darkness looking for the light switch.

 When you go through periods of darkness, how much of it is your responsibility and how much of it stems from the attacks of Satan?

I am not sure that I have an answer for that question. There are times that I struggle through periods of darkness because I intentionally walk away from the light. At other times, it seems to be attacks from the enemy to take me down.

 Several years ago, there was a spiritual warfare craze that swept through our nation. Conferences sprang up from coast to coast focusing on defeating the devil and the enemy forces.

 I jumped on the band wagon, along with most of my ministry friends. I preached about spiritual warfare. We sang songs about it. We had prayer meetings focusing on deliverance and so forth. There was some fruit that came out of this season in my life.

 Some where along the way, it appeared to me that people who had a fascination with spiritual warfare talked about the devil more than they spoke about God. It also seemed to me that people who concentrated on overcoming demonic attacks seemed to have more attacks than those people who failed to give it any credence.

 I also assessed that people in the spiritual warfare camp were a little left of center. They did not seem normal. When I talked to them, it was like they were constantly strategizing and waging warfare. Not only that, but it seemed like most of them blamed the slightest inconvenience on some sort of attack from the devil.

 For instance, last night it took an hour and a half for our washing machine to cycle. Patty noticed some type of an odor coming from the unit. When I was young in the faith and highly charismatic, I would have said, “Patty, maybe we need to pray and bind the devil from attacking our washing machine.”

 Now, that I am old and a little more seasoned, I said, “Patty, maybe we need to watch this and instead of a new dishwasher for Christmas, we may need a washing machine.”

 We live in a world where things break down and subsequently, they need to be thrown out. Certain items have a limited shelf life. If something is broken, throw it out. It’s like the saying, “How many charismatics does it take to change a light bulb? It takes a thousand. One to change the light bulb and 999 to cast out the spirit of darkness.

The beauty of the charismatic movement is that they realize that the world is a dark place and that Jesus has come to bring light.

 Back to the point. Some things just break. Other things break because our your negligence. If you drive your car without oil in the engine and your engine blows up, was that the devil’s attack on your car or your irresponsibility? I would say that it’s the latter.

 We have to take responsibility for our own actions or lack of action. We cannot live our lives constantly passing the buck or blaming others or blaming the devil for our stupidity. To many people give the devil too much credit. He is a singular individual with a lot of co-horts. These co-horts are fallen angels commonly called demons.

 Now before you write me off as one dimensional, let me say this: “We do live in a spiritual war zone.” There is a cosmic battle going on between good and evil. We are at the center of that battle. I don’t believe that Satan is living inside of my washing machine or in my dishwasher even though it’s weird that both of those units are not working properly at the same time.

 Now, having said that, I believe that there are times that the enemy of our souls will use circumstances to distract us from our full devotion to Jesus Christ. It may be a broken appliance or a blown engine or a flirtatious co-worker. Satan create opportunities for you and me to sin. We can deny it and when we fall into the trap do like Flip Wilson and cry out, “The Devil made me do it.” Or, we can look deep in our hearts and realize that we have a dark side that needs to be exposed.

 We give the devil a lot of credit that he does not deserve. So often, it’s not the devil’s darkness that we wrestle with, but our own darkness. We have rooms deep in our heart that are filled with evil. They are neatly hidden in the back part of our heart, but given the right circumstance, the darkness comes out.

Luke 6:45

The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.

 Whatever is in your heart will eventually come out of your mouth. Words just don’t slip out. Your heart is speaking. Last week, we had a staff meeting that un-nerved for some reason. I was smiling on the outside, but steaming on the inside. I don’t completely remember why. The marathon meeting was over and it was time for lunch. I was walking out the door, Todd made a joke about something. It rubbed me the wrong way. I opened my mouth and it came out. I said several unkind things to him. I told him he pushed the wrong button and so forth.

 We all got in the car and no body said a word. After about two miles, Todd said something like, “Boy, it’s quiet in this car.” By then, I am feeling bad. I apologized at the restaurant; I apologized when we got back to the church; I wrote him a email later that night and apologized again. The next day he came in my office and said, (I am paraphrasing this.)“What’s with the email? Enough with the apology. It wasn’t that big of a deal. I knew where you were coming from.” I said that it was a big deal because out of the abundance of the heart, my mouth spoke and apparently, there’s some darkness down deep inside.”

 I love the song we sing, “Into marvelous light I am running, out of darkness out of shame.” Darkness. The world is a dark place.

John 1:1-5

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was with God in the beginning.

3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

John 3:19-20

19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

Matthew 4:16-17

16 the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned."

17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

 We live in a dark world, but Jesus came to bring light into our darkness. Jesus calls us to come to him.

John 12:46

I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

 This verse tells us that we have a choice. We can live in darkness or live in the light.

Romans 13:12-13

12 ... So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

13 Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.

 We are called to live in the light. We cannot live in both places. Jesus came to set you free. You are not made for the darkness.

1 Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

 You are created to live in His light.

Transition: Speak of Lordship and Light

Acts 26:17-18

17 .... I am sending you to them

18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Closing thoughts and Prayer