

January 25, 2026

The Great Light

Isaiah 9:2, Psalm 27:1, 1 Corinthians 1:18

When I get up in the middle of the night to use the bathroom, I don't put my glasses on and I don't turn on the light. I don't want to wake up Toby... I'm not sure why no glasses, though, but if it's dark, I can't see anyway.

All of my second floor rooms feed into the stairwell – and most of you know how I feel about stairs, so I put out my left hand and run it along the wall, staying as close as possible so I don't take a tumble down the stairs. Occasionally I've left a clothes basket or a box in the hallway and I stub my toe on it as I make my way to the bathroom.

Toby may or may not wake up if I turned on the light, but he definitely wouldn't notice if I put my glasses on and used a flashlight. I'm given this wonderful opportunity not to stub my toe and not to fall down the stairs, but I stubbornly refuse this sensible and bright alternative.

Isaiah 9:2: *“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness, on them light has shined.”*

God had been trying to call the Israelites away from darkness and sin, trying to get them to listen to Him and to repent of their sins. At first, God was gentle and loving, they stubbed their toes on clothes baskets and boxes and got really annoyed, but they didn't listen. Then God's “wake-up calls” became more severe (worse than what it would feel like to fall down a flight of stairs because of my obstinance), but the Israelites continually refused to listen.

And then the prophet Isaiah started talking about this *“Great Light”* that was to come and how it would bring great joy. Their burdens would be lifted. If you continue to read Isaiah 9, we hear of judgement and oppression, we hear of the Israelites continuing in their sinful ways, but change would eventually come – this Great Light would bring endless peace.

Our world continues to walk in darkness. Sin continues to entrap, snare, deceive so many. And that darkness makes it harder to see God – because people choose not to find the Light.

If only everyone were like little children. They admit they don't like the dark. They ask for the hall light to be left on at bedtime. They ask for a nightlight. They ask their parents for the reassurance that they are safe from the monsters under the bed; they aren't afraid to ask for comfort.

So, what can we do about it? Christianity – our beliefs, our way of life – is both an individual experience as well as a corporate experience. I've used that phrase before ... “corporate experience.” We are a community, a family. We worship together, we study together, we often eat together, we've learned to have fun together. We share God's Word together. Even when we have to worship God from our homes, we are still worshipping together! We are still praying for each other. We know that we are this wonderful family that uplifts each other and provides for each other.

Too often we think, “What can I do for the church; how do I find my place in worship, study, fellowship; what should I be doing to share God's message, to share God's Great Light with the world?” Or we think, “What is all of this doing for me?”

Then one day I thought about the “corporate experience.” I thought: “What can we do for each other and for the church? How can we deepen, improve and enhance our worship service, grow our studies of God's Word and encourage Christian fellowship? How can we reach out to the needy? How should we be sharing God's message, how can we prepare each other?”

Our faith is not based solely on individualism, or by only having our own connection with God, or pulling ourselves up by our own bootstraps, or by making it on our own. That is the basis of American individualism, but it's against the central work God was doing on our behalf through Jesus Christ – the work and faith to which we are called in our lives.

The Christian life is about dependence, not independence, dependence especially on God, on Jesus Christ, on the Holy Spirit and on one another. We see God in the face of the person in front of us, we hear God's voice in the person on the telephone, we feel God's touch as we shake hands with the person next to us in the pew.

When we recognize our vulnerability, God gives us a family of believers that laughs with us when we laugh, cries with us when we grieve, picks us up when we fall and stands beside us when we can't stand alone. We stand united, not divided.

Last week I touched on having the courage to be a witness for Jesus Christ; being willing, ready and brave enough to share the message of salvation and then we read 1 Corinthians, especially verse 18.

In the first chapter, we see the church in Corinth struggling with division, separation. The Corinthians were a people who followed fads and Paul was concerned that Christianity was becoming a fad. He wrote this letter to remind them of Jesus' teachings and to encourage them to be unified in Christ. It's written for us, too, to remind us to work in unity, in community, together, for Christ.

Verse 18 reads, *"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing."* Does anyone here enjoy looking like a fool? Not the kind of fool that's the center of attention, making everyone laugh. I'm talking about the truly embarrassing, how could I let other people see me do such a stupid thing, kind of fool. Looking like a fool is something we don't want.

If we consider our beliefs, are we fools? There are those who would say we are. But let's take our responsibilities seriously and share this foolishness with the world. *"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."*

Kirk Cameron, who went from being a child actor in 'Growing Pains' to being an evangelist, says that after fire and brimstone left the pulpit, modern evangelism had to find another reason for sinners to respond to the Gospel and they chose "life enhancement" – Jesus Christ will give you love, joy, peace, happiness and a lasting fulfillment – and don't get me wrong, He will.

Maybe you've heard the story Cameron shares:

Two men were in an airplane. The first man was told to put on the parachute because it will improve his flight. "Yeah sure," he thinks, but he'll try it. It seems heavy on his shoulders and uncomfortable. He'll keep trying it for a little longer, though.

Then the other passengers start laughing at him for wearing a parachute inside the plane. He throws it on the floor and he gets angry that he was lied to – the parachute certainly didn't improve his flight – it just made him a laughing stock.

The second passenger was told to put on the parachute because in a few minutes he would be jumping 2500 feet out of the plane. The weight of the parachute means nothing to him because he knows it will save his life. The other passengers snickered, but he didn't much care.

The first man will probably never put a parachute on again. The second man knows that he will be saved from death. This lets him take the teasing of the other passengers.

The modern Gospel says, put on the Lord Jesus Christ for love, joy, happiness and peace - Jesus will improve your flight. So, a person "tries on" the Lord Jesus Christ. She gets mocked and teased by her friends. He becomes bitter and he's worse off than before.

Instead of telling people that Jesus improves their flight, we should warn the passengers that we will be jumping from a plane. When they realize the horrible consequences of living without God they will turn to Jesus.

The second passenger had joy and peace in his heart because he knew the parachute was going to save him from certain death.

"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing." They won't perish – die for eternity, though, if they've seen the Great Light, if they understand that Jesus is their salvation!

And then we have David proclaiming that the Lord is his light and his salvation – and if this be true, whom shall he fear?! He says that the Lord is the stronghold of his life, of whom shall he be afraid?!

David knew that the Lord would keep him safe; he knew that he was to seek the face of the Lord. David calls out to the Lord to hear his voice and to be merciful to him, to answer him. And David speaks of how he's been blessed.

I've talked a lot about sharing our faith. The other day I was speaking with Toby about needing to be stronger in God's Word so that I could both share and defend my faith. I've blamed my inability to memorize ... memorize just about anything – not just scripture. So, I've taken to writing down a key verse of scripture on a note card and reading it over and over and over – so that it stays strong in my mind. When I have that one down securely, I'll add another. I know what I believe, but I sometimes fear knowing how to defend it.

Have you decided what you most fear about sharing the shelter God provides you, about sharing the comfort God offers, about sharing the salvation you receive through Jesus Christ?

The works of Jesus Christ fill us with wonder; He encourages us to share what we know, what we feel and what is exploding from us! And the Holy Spirit will give us the words when we are called to use them ... but we have to be in the Word for those words to make sense.

We need to speak of what we have, the joy that fills us, how we've been blessed, to allow God to work through us. We need to let people know how we feel about what God has been doing in our lives. We need to let others know that they can have a life this rich, too!

Many of us have memorized John 3:16 – *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”* These are the first words I've written down so I can meditate on them, breathe them in and out, make them my own.

God has asked us to go out and tell the world of the wonder of all that we can have when we admit our sin, believe in Jesus Christ and accept eternal life.

What can you share? Who can you share it with? We've talked so many times about living the Christian life to be an example to others. That's walking the walk – but remember to talk the talk, too!

I know that you may not be the person that guides 1000 people to God. But maybe you are! Maybe your life, your words, your faith may touch one person who will then touch millions!

To be a member of the church is to struggle together to understand what it means to follow the One we call Lord. If we follow Jesus Christ, then we are to look to our own lives and our own world and say, "Where is the suffering today? Who is dying today?"

And then we are to go together to that place, for wherever there is suffering, where there is oppression, where there is pain, where there is a need, we are sure to meet Jesus in that place.

We may be going in spirit through the money and prayers we offer or we may go in person, reaching out to our neighborhoods, our cities, our country and other countries.

I've included John 3:17 on my memorization card. It's essence I easily remember. It goes on to say that *“God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.”* How dare we condemn the world by not opening our mouths and sharing the Good News and the Great Light!