

St. David's Presbyterian Church
St. John's, NL
"Reflecting the Light"
Dr. J. Dent

January 11, 2009

Light is a fascinating study in physics and science. We are dependent upon it, and we have not figured out what it is. It behaves both like a wave and a particle. What we see is dependent upon the light. Our lives are dependent upon the light.

Don't be taken in by the end of the world science fiction movies that tell you the human race will be able to live underground or that somehow we can block out the sun in the atmosphere and still survive. We know that even a lack of sunshine can produce Vitamin D deficiencies which cause humans problems.

The light brings definition, optical perspective, without which we would be completely blind. You know this is how we are able to see, and you also know that colour exists because of the light. You've probably even noticed that those new curly cue fluorescent light bulbs give off a different spectrum of light and therefore a different feel and a different colour. Fluorescent bulbs also give off a sound, but that is for a different sermon.

We are dependent on the light to get around, to see our way, to experience life with vision. Light is essential to life, for plants, for animals and humans, even if your vision is gone or greatly reduced.

So you can see why God would use the light to lead us to Jesus. It was his first act of creation, "Let there be light," (Genesis 1:3) "yehi 'or" in Hebrew, "fiat lux" in Latin, which was also the motto of the University of California at Berkeley. The light commenced God's programme of creation. It's no wonder that God chose a light to lead the magi to the Light.

John put it this way in his gospel: "The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him." (John 1:9) This one was..., now an infant, and still a young child when the magi finally made it to Bethlehem, this one was the Light that brings definition, optical perspective, without which we would be completely blind. Our lives are dependent on this Light.

The old Jewish fisherman, John, makes a universal claim that this truly is the Messiah, the Christ who is the One to bring us to God and relationship with God. He knew that it was possible to reject this light, and to stay in the darkness, just like when we find ourselves in the midst of a power outage. The lights go off, all the machines go silent, and, if we are lucky, we remember where our alternate sources of light are stored.

We search for the candle or flashlight or matches or whatever will give us something that will alleviate tripping over the furniture. Did I really put that footstool there? Or perhaps you have young children over and suddenly you find their toys in an unexpected place, which is fine when you can see them, but now that you can't you feel yourself losing your footing and heading quickly for the floor, which you are now wondering why you chose a hard surface rather than that carpet you had been considering...All of this is due to a lack of light.

This is a parable of our lives when we choose against the Light of the World, or rather keep putting off the choice of following the Light, as the wise ones did so long ago. See here the centre of Epiphany, the manifestation of the One on whom the light shines to tell us that such a Light is for all humanity, and not just one race of people in the Middle East.

Matthew, the old Jewish tax collector turned follower of Jesus, writes for us of a drama which speaks to our own spiritual choices. Will we side with the magi who go to worship the One foretold in the heavens, or will we side with Herod who would do anything to make sure he stayed king of his own life and the lives of those around him?

I'm sure you've had many experiences recently that will confirm that you are not the king or queen of those around you. You probably, as I have, also had the experience of realizing anew that you are not even the king or queen of your own life, or not even as William Ernest Henley (1849-1903), modern English poet puts it in his poem "Invictus": "I am the master of my fate, the captain of my soul."

Yes, we have choices and personal responsibility, but we are not meant to be the god or monarch or even sea captain of our own lives. We are built to be in relationship with the God who created life and with one another. We

desperately need God and we desperately need the community of others around us. There the Light of life leads us to love.

I'm not sure what the magi saw in the face of the baby Jesus that night they came. I'm not even sure how strong the light was, whether it was a spotlight that led them like a special effect from heaven, or merely the conjunction of planets or stars, or even something else that we cannot account for in normal astronomy.

But they came and they saw him and they worshipped. These strangers, who as far we know had nothing to do with the culture or religion of this family, they came and worshipped. And so we too are invited, here at the ends of the earth, a long way away from the Middle East to worship that same One who is still alive and well and relating to all who desire relationship with Him.

They brought out their gifts, which I believe was how God provided for them for their journeys to Egypt and then back to Nazareth. It was unlikely that Joseph could do much carpentry without his tools, although he may have been able to get some work depending on the housing market or finishing carpentry market of the day in Egypt. But I believe the gold and the frankincense and the myrrh were not only gifts to reflect the royalty of Jesus and the fact that he was born to die for us, but also was the extraordinary provision of the Lord for the holy family's upcoming travels. God provided for this family, and I believe he wants to provide for your family as well.

One of the amazing properties of light is that it not only takes over the darkness, but it also shines off of everything it touches. I believe the light of the star that led the magi to Jesus was less than the Light which reflected off Jesus' face into the eyes of the magi. Although we have no record of it, I believe the magi were changed. Not only did they change their minds about Herod, they were changed men. So is everyone who looks into the eyes of Jesus, the Light of the World.

Take a moment to look into his eyes right now.

The Scripture teaches us that the Light of Jesus Christ reflects off of us into others. Paul said it this way, "For God, who said, 'let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the

knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ." (2 Cor. 4:6) All of us who know and love Jesus reflect the Son. Just as Moses' face glowed in reflection of the God of light, so we too reflect Him. This may not be apparent to you. And there are times where we wonder if we reflect the love and purposes of the Lord at all.

But as we trust the One who gave himself for us, so we trust in the Light that shines directly from himself and indirectly through us. We are in fact the stained glass windows of the Church. It's the people who are the windows of the Church.

Throughout Epiphany and beyond, let us choose to reflect the Light that is ours, and for all, to God's glory.

Let us pray.