

As the crowds increased, Jesus said, “This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.³⁰ For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation.³¹ The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.³² The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here.

³³“No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead he puts it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light.³⁴ Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness.³⁵ See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness.³⁶ Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted, as when the light of a lamp shines on you.” (NIV84)

Theme: As you wait, Let the Light Shine.

1. The Light is all you need.
2. The Light illumines your Soul.

In our lesson from Isaiah today Jesus is called a light. He is also referred to as dawn, when the light begins to shine on the dark world. From this passage and others we get the stanza from the O Antiphons of Advent as well as “Oh Come, Oh Come Emmanuel”—“O Come O Dayspring from on High.” In the hymn our series is based on tonight we called Jesus the “Lord of Light.” This evening we used the alternate beginning—the Service of Light. We called Jesus, the “Light of the World.”

Four songs—all mention Christ as light. The idea of Christ and his gospel being the light of the world is common in the Bible. All of those songs could have been based on a number of different passages—this evening’s text included. Today as you wait for the Lord, Let the Light Shine. For that Light is all we need and that Light illumines your soul.

You may remember that right before our text Jesus had cast out a demon from a mute man. When the demon left, the man was suddenly able to talk. When the crowd that was following Jesus saw this, they were amazed. The Pharisees, however, were not impressed. They claimed that Jesus only had the power to do this by the devil. Others wanted more proof from Jesus that he was from God. They saw the miracles that Jesus performed. They even listened to him preach. But it wasn’t enough. They wanted more—they wanted a special sign.

At times we may want a special sign from God. Sure we have the Word. Sure we have the sacraments. We know that God’s Word is true. But at times, that is not enough. We look for proof in nature. We want science to find proof that evolution is false. We long to find evidence of the flood. We know there is a heaven. But we love the books about someone who died and went to heaven, only to return again. We act as if the Word is not good enough. But when we have seen an additional sign then we can be sure of what the Bible says. We also look for signs in our personal lives. God promises to watch over you. He promises to protect you. But you have your doubts. You or your loved ones are in pain. Perhaps you are struggling financially. And so you wonder if God truly does love you, if he truly is watching over you. You just need him to heal you or your loved one from disease. You just need him to give you a job. You just need some sign from him. Then you will believe him.

Jesus response to those who want a special sign? **A wicked generation asks for a sign.** And yet, in his love he gives us one. **None will be given it except the sign of Jonah.** In Matthew account we learn what Jesus meant by this. **For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.** The sign that Jesus gave them was that he would rise from the dead. Just as Jonah came out of the fish after three days, so Christ would come out of the earth after three days. That means that Jesus would suffer, die, and rise for us.

That is the ultimate sign. It leads us to see who Jesus truly is. His resurrection proves that he is God and holds power over death. It was a sign that we too will rise from the dead. It shows us that his

suffering and death paid the price for our sins. His resurrection is proof that God accepted his payment. The people asked for a sign. And like the gracious God that he is—Christ said “here’s your sign” and pointed to his resurrection.

The only way we know about Christ’s resurrection is through God’s Word. And it is through the Word that the Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts. The way it is today is the way it was thousands of years ago. Jesus said in verse 30, **For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation.** Jonah didn’t want to preach to the Ninevites. He knew the power of the Word, and he didn’t want his enemies to believe. God got his message across to Jonah by having a fish swallow him. And when he arrived and preached the people listened. These people had never heard God’s Word before. Yet in a matter of days the whole city was brought to faith through a simple message of law and gospel! The Light is all we need.

The same could be said of the Queen of Sheba. In verse 31 Jesus mentions that **she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.** Sheba is located in modern-day Yemen. It was over 1000 miles from Jerusalem—not a short distance thousands of years ago. But the Queen heard about Solomon’s wisdom from the Lord and wanted to learn more. She asked Solomon any question she could think of. And Solomon answered them all. And by the end of her trip, she was a believer. Solomon had shared the message of the Lord with her and she believed.

The Light is all we need. We don’t need any extra signs. We have the Word of the Light. That was enough to bring a whole city to faith and a foreign queen. It’s enough because of the Holy Spirit working through it. And so we see that the Light illumines your soul. Therefore we let it shine all the more.

With out contacts or glasses, I can’t see much. But I can still see some things. But I don’t know blindness. I don’t know total darkness. In this day and age with electricity we have a hard time understanding complete darkness. Even if you are in a room at night with the lights off, you can still see something. It is the flashing light from the clock,

the reflection from the light down the hall, the glow from the street light outside. Once your eyes adjust, you can still see something. But before electricity, once it got dark, and if it was cloudy and had no lamp, it was dark. Completely dark.

If you have ever taken a tour of a cave, you know that they will often turn off the lights. They take you deep into the cave, lights go off and it is dark—pitch dark. You can’t even see your hand in front of your face. That is what we are by nature. We are in complete spiritual darkness. We are born as enemies of God. We don’t know him and don’t want to know him. We live our lives in darkness and unbelief. We walk around in life groping for the walls—searching for some meaning in life. But we are completely lost by nature.

There is only one light in that can light up this sin-darkened world—Christ. He is the Light of the World. Through Christ we see the way of salvation. We see that it is through him and him alone that we are saved. We see that when we were dead in our sins, God sent his Son to save us. And that Son, that Light of the World, lived a perfect life and gave it to us as he removed our sins. Through his resurrection all believers will rise to be with him forever. We see that we have to do nothing to be saved, for the Light has done it all. We see that the purpose in life is to serve him in everything we do. It is Christ who takes us out of the darkness of unbelief into the wonderful light. And it is faith that receives the blessings that the Light revealed to us.

Jesus said in verse 34, **Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness.** In this analogy Christ is the Light, the eye is faith, and the body is our whole being. We are in darkness without the eye of faith that sees the light. But with faith—when we see the light of Christ, our whole body is able to see. No longer are we groping for walls searching for something to lead us somewhere. We have seen the light of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Through faith our whole selves have seen the light of Christ. Our dark souls have been illumined by the Light of Christ.

Because the Light is able to illuminate an area that no other light is able to, we want to let that Light shine. We do with this Light of the World what we do with normal lights. We lift it up so all may see it. **No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden,**

or under a bowl. Instead he puts it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light. This Light is more powerful than any other light. But it cannot shine if we keep it hidden. So instead of hiding it when we want to—only bringing it out when it is convenient for us, we let that Light Shine. Share the message with others. Live a life that indicates to others who you are. Show them your faith by how you live. Let the Light of Christ, let the Light of his gospel shine. So that the whole world may see him.

And when the Light comes, we will shine like the Light. As Jesus describes Judgment Day in Matthew 13, **Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.** For we will be perfect just like Christ is perfect. Those who were once in darkness—who were once blind with nothing to grasp onto and no one to show them the way, have seen the light. We have been made to shine like the Light. For we will be made perfect like the Light. What joy awaits us when the light returns! So as we wait, we let it shine.

The Light and the Light of his Word is the only thing we need. We don't need any other sign. For he rose from the dead to prove who he is and what he has done. So as we wait for him this Advent season, Let the Light shine. For when the Light returns he will make you shine like him forever. Amen.