

Spirit-Filled Pastor: The Greatest Gift You Can Give God This Christmas

As we have talked with our relief partners working in the aftermath of the tornadoes that devastated Kentucky, Tennessee and surrounding states, we are heartbroken by the stories of so many lives that were tragically disrupted during a season that should be a time of celebration. They've lost everything.

There are many other tragedies across our nation and around the world, too—great losses that are causing discouragement, despair and darkness. But this is an opportunity for us as the church to truly be a city set on a hill, with the light of Christ shining in us to even those who may oppose us.

With so many going through difficulties this holiday season, it is so important that we the church be a light, because the Word dwells among us. We have a joy and a strength beyond human comprehension. We have a peace that surpasses all understanding. It's important for us as the church to give that hope, to let our light so shine in such a way that it draws others close to the Lord. We can be an example to those around us that they can find their faith, hope, peace and joy in the midst of their difficulties.

Jesus is the Word that dwells among us, and He is the light of the world. And right now, we need a whole lot of light in the darkness.

Light Has Come

The four weeks leading up to Christmas are known as Advent. During this season many people personally and intentionally prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, the fulfillment of the promise of His manifest presence and the expectation of

His Second Coming.

The four themes of Advent, according to an article by Jackson Greer in the Focus on the Family newsletter, are hope, faith, joy and peace. "The Advent season reminds us that God sent His Son to this world so that we might have a relationship with Him. Yet, Jesus also suffers with us and helps us to navigate even through our pain," he wrote. What a great message that is right now, when so many are suffering.

Jackson goes on to say, "During Advent, Christians celebrate and reflect upon Jesus Christ's first coming, while at the same time, the Church looks forward in eager anticipation to Christ's Second Coming. When Christians and family celebrate Advent, they unite in a generational tradition of celebration and anticipation of Jesus's Second Coming."

During Advent, we celebrate the miraculous birth of Jesus, the light of the world. Hope came into the world as the Word that dwells amongst us.

I love what the Word says in John 8:12: "Then Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life.'"

1 John 1:5-7 says: "This then is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you: God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."

Today, the world desperately needs the light of Christ.

He Dwells Among Us

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and

the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were created through Him, and without Him nothing was created that was created. In Him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. The light shines in darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:1-5).

As we consider Advent, it's important to understand that in the beginning was the Word, which is Christ. God gave us His only begotten Son. But Advent is about anticipation, not only for the first coming but also for the Second Coming of the Lord.

The dictionary defines Advent as "the arrival of a notable person, a thing or an event." For us as Christians, Advent is the expectation of Christ. Because of His birth, we live in this constant manifest presence of a holy, holy, holy God. But we also have this expectation of the arrival of the Second Coming of the Lord.

This is an exciting treasure and time for us, because God is the Word, and He loved us so much that He gave Himself to us that we might live in His Word, know His Word, share His Word and be a witness of His light to a world that desperately needs the Lord.

In a world of difficulty that seems to be covered with darkness, we have a moment to declare the miracle of God Christ with us! Joy to the world, the Lord has come! We have the light of the world living in us! It should permeate our lives and radiate from us to those around us. A little light in a dark room lights up the room.

"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16)

We can let the light of Christ shine through us in very practical ways: spiritually, physically, financially, relationally. Jesus said if we follow Him then we don't have

to walk in darkness, because we have the light of the world who leads us to life, and He will guide others out of their darkness to life as well.

Right now, we need the themes of Advent. We need to remember the promises and the great miracles God has done, the great miracles God is doing and the great miracles God will continue to do. We need to share our hope, faith, joy and peace because light has come into the world, and the Word dwells among us. {eoa}

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