

This morning, I got asked why we read the scriptures that we read. Do I just pick him out of the air? Do I follow something? Well, it's both. I do just pick him out of the air, but I do follow something too. And today's scripture reading, when I was preparing for it, I thought, well, this is an odd one to have now. Because we're talking about God's promise through Isaiah that the Christ child will come. This one you almost always read during Advent. So that made me panic and I was thinking, did I miss the beginning of Advent? Am I off on my weeks? I'm not, so don't worry. We're going to be okay, and it's going to be here at the same time it always is. Christmas is going to come, just like it normally does. And November is almost over, which is really hard to believe.

But I thought it was odd that we're talking about this now. Why are we talking about the coming of the Christ child? We're going to be talking about that soon. Why would we need to talk about it today? Well it gave me a great introduction into our confirmation class this morning, and I asked them. Let's look at this scripture, and it talks about light and darkness two extremes. Where do you see the light? Anyone want to take a guess what their first answer was. It was Henry. Sunrise is a good answer. Where else? Yeah, I'm asking real today. Cell phones. Cell phone is Henry's answer. That's where the light is. I'm like, you're right, it is, but where else do we see it if we are back in biblical times? What would light be used for?

We'd use it to find the way. We're getting a light from the back on his cell phone. So we use it to find our way. We use it to cook our food. We use it to heat and keep us warm. It's a great thing. Why is it important? I said well because of everything you just said. So where do you see it? Where do you see light when you come into the church? Well, the lights. Obviously. Where else do you see it? The big white candle next to the organ. Okay, where else? The red candle. The two candles on the altar behind me. Why are each one of those candles different? If it's all God's light, why do we light each one differently, because the white one's never lit, only on Christmas and Easter. The red one never goes out, and Ron makes sure of that. That reminds us of those who have passed. The candles on the altar, I get asked about that one a lot. Why do we have those candles? We bring the light in every Sunday and take it out at the end of church each week. And they didn't know why. They are like, I think I heard about it once when I was in Sunday school. I'm like you're still in Sunday school.

A lot of adults don't know either. We get taught at one time, especially back when we had so many more people. We get told when we are serving our time to light the candle that we're bringing in God's light. We're starting each week and each service with that light. And we take it out to share it with the world. It serves as a reminder of God's love for us. It serves as a reminder that light is within us, within each and every one of us. And it's there because they put it there. Sometimes we forget to light it. Sometimes we forget to put it out. That's just like within each one of us, too, right? Sometimes, we forget that that light shines through us.

Today's reading isn't talking about the coming of Christ as much as it's talking about the division within us and within everyone else. There are those of us who talk and preach the righteousness of God. We live by Christ's example. Every day, we are God's light. We feed the hungry. We put clothing on the naked. We give water to the thirsty. If we help those who can't help themselves, we are the light.

But sometimes, we're also the darkness because we don't see the struggles that everybody faces every day of their life. And we think that they're just in a bad mood. So we blow them off. Really, they could be asking for help. They could be reaching out and the only way they know how. They see struggles within themselves. They have conflicts that they don't understand. They've been taught all their life they're to think one way. That people are wrong, that they are the only right opinion.

They're taught. that women shouldn't have a voice. They're taught that their value system is different and wrong because they might not believe and have the same feelings as everybody else. Our own constitution says. that our gender and race make us less than a white man. That's been changed, but there are still people who believe that; there are still people who preach that.

This week alone, I heard so many people tell me that I'm wrong because I have friends that are Jewish, that are Muslim, that are part of the LGBTQ community. That I allow women to speak. That's my favorite one. When people tell me I'm wrong because I allow women to speak. I'm like, you meet the women in my life and tell them no. Not happening. Talk to my daughter for five minutes.

But that darkness is still within people. And no matter how hard we will not be able to get it out of them. But that doesn't mean we need to stop our light from shining. It doesn't mean that we keep that warmth inside instead of giving it to others. It doesn't mean that we have to be like them. The second part of the scripture talks about all of the negative things that happen to people who do that. They get defeated. They get bloodied. They get beat down, because that's not what God wants. That's not what God intends for us to do. That's not who God intends for us to be. We are to be the light. We are to shine, if we are to warm. We are to give, and it's a wonderful thing, because right now, this time of year, there's going to be a lot of people that'll be looking for that light.

There's gonna be a lot of people that want to go to church and don't know how, because they've been gone for so long. They're people that want to be a part of a community and don't know how, because they might have just moved. And they don't know anybody, so they hang out at the library, or they hang out at Git and Go. They hang out at Casey's or the bowling alley. But the fellowship that they're looking for is here, but they don't know how to get here. We can be that light. We can help remind them of the warmth that's in these four walls. We can help remind them that they have a home. That they aren't alone because they're going to need it. We all need that reminder that we are not alone. Let us pray.