

Bryce wrote today's service before he left for Philadelphia but he left the sermon for me. I don't know what his thoughts were about the scripture passages that were chosen but I'll try to outline a few things as to my thinking on them.

The last time I gave the sermon for a service, we were outside commemorating covid and the duracheo and how they had affected our congregation. I started out with "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times". Today's lessons stress that we have come from the darkness into the light. It was the worst of times, it was the best of times.

Jesus, You are the light of the world. Shine your light in us today.

Chase away the darkness of sin.

Fill us with the light of your Word.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light

For a child has been born for us: Reminds us of the light from the Star that the Magi's followed

Again, St. Paul's has had its time of darkness and light.

We, as Christian people, have been charged with carrying the light of God into the world. We mainly do that by our actions. It is hard for some, myself included, to reach out to the unchurched. I feel welcoming in my heart, but the actual task of inviting someone to church I hesitate. I can stand up here and talk all day but

don't ask me to speak to a stranger or with a group I'm not familiar with. But there are those of you who can. I sight Jim Janovick with sharing our blessing with his baseball team. God's light goes with those boys whether they have a church or not or no matter the denomination.

I almost felt giddy the other day when I read on Facebook a comment from a True Value Hardware customer stating how helpful and kind the two teens working there had been. I had a hunch one of them was Alex Saxton and later on I found out I was correct. Now, I know that St. Paul's can't take full credit for Alex's actions but I can't help feeling that in some way his ties to us have made a difference. He is a 5<sup>th</sup> generation member of a St. Paul's family. We have many others that are long standing and their lights shine throughout the community in many ways. There is widespread participation by our members throughout the community. Not to slight the other teen at True Value, he too has a strong church background. His family is part of the Catholic church and also have been for several generations.

During the same week, a sad story came out about the Boone Little League teams severing their ties with Madrid and Perry. There is something about bad language and throwing things at children by an umpire. I have no idea who the participants are or any further details. However, it feels like a time of darkness. But, in this

darkness, there was mention of coaches and players apologizing for the actions of some. These are children under 14 years of age and yet their lights are shining. We have an upcoming opportunity with Ragbrai to have a successful fund raiser. We might have visitors from all over the country. There is little to no opportunity to cull new members from this group but I know we will show our Christian values and shine our lights with friendliness and good will. . We do have the opportunity to use the Mission funds from this project for something productive for the entire town. Maybe next years summer lunch program, or something more for Greater Love. I can't tell you how sad I was that the Ministerial Association was not able to come together for the lunch program this year. If we have the opportunity, let's let our friends and neighbors from other congregations know how we feel. Shine the light and maybe next year it will happen.

There are many other examples I could give of us sharing the Light of Christ. Each of you sitting in the pews today and those watching on Live Stream or just thinking about us has a story to tell. Let's keep it up and when the dark times come, let us dig a little deeper to find that ray of light that was either there all along, or the opportunity to shine a new one.

Amen.