

“The Light of Life” – A Christmas Eve Sermon – First Service at Common Street Community Church – December 24, 2012

1. Intro

Tonight’s celebration of Christ’s birth comes only a few short days after the shortest and darkest day of the year

—so the good news is—

from this day on the days will get longer and there will be more light.

*Prayer of preparation.*

2. Scripture:

The prologue to the Gospel of John gives a mystical interpretation of Jesus’ birth.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.<sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God.<sup>3</sup>All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being<sup>4</sup>in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.<sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Later in the Gospel of John, picking up on these themes, Jesus proclaims,

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

3. Theme Question: What is the light of life?

4. Story: Tell about candlelight vigil last Saturday after last Friday’s tragic events in Sandy Hook Connecticut.

5. Theme Answer: The light of life is a peaceful light, within all people.

It is not specific to race, nation, religion, age, class...it is universal.

I am talking about the light of God that is within all people. That is the light of life.

6. We are here tonight celebrating the birth of Jesus because the light of life in us recognizes the light of life in Jesus.

Despite all the misrepresentations of the religion of Jesus,

despite all the ways churches have turned a religion of love into a religion of pride and prejudice and exclusion, I could go on but I'll spare you,

we nevertheless find ourselves drawn to Jesus, and we feel there is something holy and right in celebrating his birth tonight,

because we see the light of life shining in him so brightly that the centuries of wrong done in his name cannot obscure it.

As the scripture says, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

And so, like moths to a flame, we are drawn to follow Jesus by the inward leading of the light of life.

7. Now I want to be clear that our inner light, the light of life within us, is not solely attracted to Jesus, nor should it be.

The same light that shines in Jesus shines in our neighbors and in other faith traditions, other cultures, other nations, and in great spiritual leaders besides Jesus. This is the universal light that emanates from the God of all creation.

Light is light wherever it comes from. I believe that to be a follower of Jesus in our pluralistic age one must be open to receiving the light of other faiths. For if we shut ourselves off from the faith and spirituality of our neighbor, we set up a roadblock to the love of neighbor—and love of neighbor is the heart of Jesus.

8. And so we are here, celebrating the birth of One whose light shines so brightly that the Gospel of John rightly calls him “the light of the world.”

And we are also here celebrating the birth of Common Street Community Church.

--JOKE: and just like we don't expect the baby Jesus to be walking and talking from day one...our church has a way to go before we become “mature”

My hope is that this community will be one in which people come alive to the light of life that is within them and within all people.

I envision a church that recognizes and is open to the various ways people in 21<sup>st</sup> century New England discover and express the light of life that is within them,

THINK ABOUT INVITING CONGREGATIONAL PARTICIPATION HERE:

through art, music, and literature, through various forms of religion and spirituality, through social action and activism, yoga and tai chi, community organizing and service, being in nature, through simple acts of kindness,

so that in this place and in our community we will join with people of all faiths and cultures in celebrating our common humanity made in the image of God.

9. It says in scripture that the church is the body of Christ, and all of us are members of it, body parts.

Together, adding our lights to one another's, like so many different body parts,

Let us seek to live and move and have our being in the compassion, justice, faith, prayer, and life of integrity and good deeds that we find in Jesus.

Together let us discover our center in the light of life, and let us indeed live from the center. AMEN.