

# Third Sunday in Advent

**BY THE LIGHT OF JESUS WE KNOW IT'S DARK OUT**

**John 1:6-8, 19-28**

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**Analysis by Timothy J. Hoyer**

6There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

19This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." 21And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." 22Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" 23He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said. 24Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. 25They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" 26John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, 27the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." 28This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

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## DIAGNOSIS: IT'S DARK OUT

**Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem)** : *We Don't Think It's Dark*

There is darkness (v. 5). It's already here. John does not define what he means by darkness. But darkness is contrasted with the life that is in the Word who is God. The life that comes into being in the Word (vv. 3-4) is the light of all people (v. 4). But we already have light. The sun shines and we can see. We can see even at night because of electrically generated light. We can see around the world and to the edge of the universe. We can see those we love. We can see greed galore, prejudice, abuse, despair, murder, poverty, sickness, apathy, malaise, and war. We can see acts of kindness, deliveries of food aid, free medical care for babies at the children's hospital. We call all those things life. We can see them. It's not dark.

**Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem)** : *We Believe We Can See in the Dark*

A man named John testifies that the light is coming into the darkness that is already here. The darkness is that we cannot see God. Since we cannot see God, we do not love God. We stumble around in the dark trying to find God, trying to find God by saying God is love, by saying there must be a God, by saying there is a God out there but not paying any attention to us and therefore we don't have to pay any attention to God. We deal with what we call life. The things of life fill us with fear or hope, love or hate, anger or apathy. Our hearts react to the many things we see in life, but our hearts do not react to God because it is dark and we can't see God. That man named John keeps telling us the light is coming into our darkness. But who would pay attention to someone saying it is dark when we can see?

### **Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) :** *We Remain in the Dark about God*

Eventually the final darkness of death comes. Some say death is a matter of fact. It's just there. "Everyone has to die sometime." You live, you die, and you are no more. Get used to it. Some say there is life after death with God, sort of an automatic thing. Sort of, because you have to be kind of be good. But if someone you love dies, even if they were a greedy and abusive person, then you don't want them to become nothing. Even those who are not even kind of good go to heaven. We are in the dark about whether anything or nothing happens after death. Some others fear death—fear the unknown, fear losing the joys of living. Some want death to end the weakness of their age, to end having to endure suffering or chemotherapy that works but will kill them before the cancer is dissolved by the chemicals.

## **PROGNOSIS: CHRIST IS THE LIGHT OF GOD**

### **Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) :** *Jesus' Resurrection Life Is the Light of All People*

The man John testifies to the light, that the light is life with God's mercy and forgiveness for all people. The light is already here. We listen to John, we urge people to listen to John, only because the light has already come in Jesus. That we know because God raised him from the dead. The darkness of death has not overcome him (v. 5)! God raised him up, not to this same darkness, but raised him up as the first of a new creation of light where God is seen. John is the testifier, the teller, no Elijah nor the light nor the Messiah. John sees Jesus as God because John is in the light. John sees Jesus and declares, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin [darkness] of the world!" The light is here. John is a witness to the light named Jesus, crucified and risen.

### **Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (External Solution) :** *Jesus Is Whom*

### *We Trust To Be Our Life*

Jesus is the light of God. To see Jesus is to see God (14.8). To see Jesus is to see that there is more than death, that death is not a fact of life but a demand of God upon those who are in the dark about God—and that is all people. John testifies to Jesus as the light of God “so that all might believe through him” (v. 7). Jesus is a light of mercy and love and forgiveness in a world full of the darkness of “last hired, first fired,”—a world of rules and regulations and retribution of rewards and recrimination. Yes, now we see that the world is full of judgment, full of God’s accusations. That is so terribly dark, but the darkness does not overcome the light of Jesus. We believe that he is the Son of God.

### **Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) :** *We Know It’s Dark But We Tell Others the Light of God Has Come*

All that we saw before as life, we now see as what preserves and protects life, or as what is evil—that is, that which does not preserve and protect life. In the darkness of rules and retribution, of having to earn life, having to prove one’s worth, where others do much to make themselves worth so much more than everyone else that their actions and businesses do not preserve and protect life, we testify to the light of Jesus and the new life of mercy and love for others. We are now John. We are the testifiers. We are the tellers. We talk to others about how God’s “grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (v. 17) and that rules and regulations, like having to be kind of good, come through Moses. Moses is the darkness. We cannot see the God who sent his Son Jesus to die and to raise him from the dead if we have only the darkness of Moses and his rules to see by. There was a person sent from God, whose name was [insert your name here]. You have come as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe in Jesus through you. Jesus is the light and the darkness has not overcome it.