

Something that Sparkles
Series: Just What We Needed
Isaiah 9:2; Matthew 2:1-11
December 25, 2016

What a wonderful day today is. Christmas Day. Many of you have opened presents already at various family gatherings. Maybe you opened presents this morning from a certain jolly fellow. Maybe some of you are like our family. We have a brief window of time this afternoon before one of the boys has to go to work, so we will exchange presents right after church. And that should tell you something: this will be a short sermon.

Today, I'm going to close our Christmas sermon series "Just What We Needed" with a message entitled, "Something that Sparkles."

Much of the Christmas wrapping we use to wrap our presents are on the shiny side. We want them bright and shiny to go with the mood of the holiday.

Of course, you've got those trouble makers who have different ideas for wrapping paper. Anyone here ever had someone use newspaper to wrap their presents? Duct tape? I saw a picture of someone who used expired aeronautical charts as wrapping paper; I guess since you have to buy those things every 90 days, you got plenty of them. I'm getting a present today – I'm so excited – wrapped in an Amazon box... well, wrapped is really not the right word; it was put under the tree in the shipping box it came in.

Most of us are attracted to the shiny, to the light.

We put up outdoor lights. We put lights on our Christmas tree.

When Myra and I went on our honeymoon cruise, the boat we were on had a casino. That's the first and only time I've been to a casino. You know what casino operators use to get your attention? Lights. Lots of flashy lights. It pulls you in. And no, we didn't play any of the games.

However, as much as we like the light and are drawn to it, our behaviors are influenced heavily by one who is called the prince of darkness. And many people are totally captivated by him, whether it is through pornography or human trafficking or child abuse or elder abuse or any other kind of abuse. There is darkness in those who murder, who rob and steal without remorse, who seek to exploit others through economics or influence. There is a lot of darkness out there.

The prophet Isaiah wrote of the coming Messiah:

*The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine.*¹

In the Greek version, it reads:

*... And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow, a light has shined.*²

We live in a very "dark land." And it's been that way for a while.

Consider the circumstances of the birth of Jesus.

READ MATTHEW 2:1-11 AND COMMENT

¹ Isaiah 9:2 (NLT)

² See Matthew 4:16 (NLT)

JOHN 1:1-9

LUKE 11:34-35

In a recent issue of Focus On The Family Magazine, Dianne Matthews remembered when she was a young girl in 1st grade the little girl behind her had brought a beautiful tiny Christmas gift to school and placed it on her desk. It was wrapped in white glossy paper and tied up with a sliver of red cellophane. "Immediately," she said "I was captivated. I had never seen anything so exquisite. Day after day, the tiny gift caught my eye, and my active imagination tried to guess what miniature treasure might be inside..."

"I longed for that object with all the power a 5 year old can muster. Finally, I became convinced that it should be mine. I deserved it because I desired it. Since I rode an early bus to school, it was a simple matter to slip into the empty classroom one morning. My hands eagerly tore open the tiny present. Inside I found - nothing."

The Bible talks of people who've had their conscious seared & calloused... they've lived so long in falsehood they don't realize how empty their gift boxes of truth have become.

Many of you know that Myra and I met on Match.com. Myra went out with 3-4 guys and they were ok dates. Then she went out with me, and she said there were sparkles. Sparkles. That's me.

MATTHEW 5:14-16

Jesus stated that we are to be the "Light of the World", and that a city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

In the Canadian province of New Brunswick, there is a church building on Deer Island that for many years has served as a physical light house to the fishermen of that community. It is not that the building has any unique architectural design that would resemble a nautical lighthouse. In fact, it resembles the style of many church buildings built a century ago.

It is the location of the building that makes it ideal as a lighthouse. The Worship House for the Church of Christ in Lord's Cove is elevated a few hundred feet higher than the Cove below.

For many years the fishermen returning to port could see the steeple of that Church building for miles from the water. In days before electronic equipment to guide them home the fishermen would aim for the Church building when returning to port. From miles away, the men would aim for the church, or the light in its steeple. That course of direction would guide them past all the ledges and shoals, and safely back to the home port.

In the 1960's the government installed navigational lights for the fishermen, but prior to that the church building had served as the Lighthouse. Just as the physical light of that building was a light that led many safely home, so also the Light of Jesus Christ leads all who will follow his light to their heavenly home. May we also serve as a light for Christ to guide others to the home port of heaven.