

SERMON
Pastor James G. Bauman
Immanuel Lutheran Church - Bartlett, Illinois
Christmas Eve, 2025

“THIS LITTLE LIGHT”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

For most people the time that Christmas finally arrives,

- there is a **feeling of relief**,

“No more last minute shopping to do. No more decorating.
And in some cases maybe, “No more relatives.”

Then, quickly, it’s clean-up time--

- gathering the used wrapping paper,
- and empty boxes, deciding what to do with left-over food.

And time to take a deep breath

- as we try to recuperate and recycle **ourselves** from all the exertion.

This sermon is about the effects of Christmas too,

- but some much, **much** more positive ones....

“This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine.”

Children often learn to know the words to that children’s song by heart

- in Sunday School or Vacation Bible School.
- But that “light” has deep and lasting meaning for **us**
- no matter what our age.

St. John in his Gospel uses **the word “light”** twenty-one times

- in referring to Christ.
- In **Him** light was coming into our world.
- But what kind of light?

We adorn our Christmas trees with hundreds of lights, little lights.

The only-begotten Son of God certainly came as a **LITTLE** light.

- Born of humble parents
- in a backwater town
- with not enough importance even to be given a room for His arrival,
- but a stable instead.

A **very** little light.

And, as He grew older and began His work,

- He did not do that
- in the bright spotlight of wealth and power.

Instead He shined a **little light of love**

- into the dark lives of sinners--
- a despised tax collector,
- a terrified adulteress about to be stoned to death,
- a hopeless thief dying on a cross.

And a little light of truth and love

- into the dark, legalistic religion of His day
- and into the lives of the benighted, self-righteous religious leaders.

Yet His seemingly little light pierced the darkness.

- And the darkness fled from it in anger and confusion.
- His little, weak-appearing light
- seemed to be snuffed out completely
- in the deep vengeful darkness of Good Friday--
- only to come back again brighter than ever
- on the first glorious Easter morning.

From that empty tomb,

- where He was placed after dying for our sins.
- He still shines for us.

Because the One who once came as the “Little Lord Jesus”

- did ALL that for us--
- even in the midst of seeming to be snuffed out
- becoming for us the best gift there could ever be,
- to be unwrapped by faith
- which He also would give us all.

And His light which once came

- in what seemed such a small, insignificant way,

- now never stops shining,
- steady and bright,
- as Risen Savior now,
- also for us

We live with the promise that one day He will return

- with power and great glory,
- to bring us at last in body and soul
- to that home where they need no light of lamp or sun,
- where night shall be no more.

Let's talk about our own little lights this evening in that context.

The One who said,

“I am the Light of the world,” (John 8:12)

also said to His followers,

“You are the light of the world.” (Matthew 5:15)

Notice: **Not** “You **SHOULD** be”

- or “You need somehow to turn yourself on to be”.
- But “**YOU ARE.**”

“I, your Lord Jesus, make you that. You are light because I say you are.”

The light of CHRIST HIMSELF is passed to us

- in a way that is symbolized

- by the thousands of candlelight Services at this time of year.

We **receive** the light for our own candle

- just as His light is **RECEVIED**.

The light that we carry is

- truly His own light that we let shine....

It's always encouraging when a major star

- makes clear that he or she is a Christian--

- and gives a Christ-centered witness--

- a star football player or a famous actress or musician--

- a celebrity from one area or another.

But **we** don't have to be a big, famous bright shining star

- for our lights to be effective.

- Jesus Himself compares our lights to a candle being lighted in a house.

- It **seems** to be a small, insignificant thing,

- and yet when it's placed up on a table,

- the whole area is lighted.

- Darkness flees from that place.

If you were ever involved in a long power outage due to a storm,

- you know from experience what a difference one little candle,

- or one small flashlight,

- can make.

And the darker the night,

- the more frightening the storm--
- the greater the importance of such a small light.

All of us have had our own dark, threatening personal storms.

- Some of us here may well be in the middle of one.
- And we are not the only ones.

Whether we are at home or at work

- or out shopping or bowling,
- there are people struggling with the forces of darkness in their lives--
- people desperate for a little Christ-like love to be given,
- and some Christ-centered truth.

Desperate to have a little light in the darkness

- caused by the unrelenting storms in their lives.
- No one escapes those storms and their damage.

Since we have **our own storms and darkness** occupying our attention,

- it's easy to try to ignore the damage being done to others' lives.
- Ignoring others' needs can seem like self-protection.

We might even decide ignoring the needs of others

- is a matter of self-survival.

Jesus teaches that such thinking is a fatal mistake.

“Those who would save their lives will lose them.”

“It is in giving that you receive.”

It's as though when we try to keep our candles protected--

- covering them up--
- they go out for lack of oxygen.

We should **never** discount the importance of our little light.

- If you have ever been in a situation where you were feeling frightened,
- alone and desperate--
- and you were on the receiving end of a little light from another Christian--
- you will easily recall what a difference it made--
- what comfort and hope and peace and new strength it brought.
- One little candle in the darkness-- it does not take a spotlight.

Or in a family--

- even a completely dysfunctional one,
- filled with all kinds of loveless words and actions.
- Some of us know what a difference
- the little light of one loving Christ-like person can make
- in a family like that--
- and especially what a saving help that person often is

- for children trapped there.

That fact should not surprise us.

The little light we have to share **is** the light of Christ Himself.

In the words of the Psalmist (18:28),

“For it is You who light my lamp; the Lord my God lightens my darkness.”

And, Psalm 27,

“**The Lord is my light** and my salvation.” Psalm 27:1

In a word, it is the light of authentic love--

- selfless, no strings attached, determined, honest, caring.

It has a divine power--

- passed down to us through the years

- from the Manger, Cross and Empty Tomb

- through the apostles, and pastors and teachers,

- and by faithful parents and friends

- to this very moment in history--

- to this fairly **common**-looking space

- and this very real and troubled time--

- passed on to us so that we can let our little lights shine.

St. Paul writes to the Corinthians,

“Think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were

wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; **God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.** He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things-- and the things that are not-- to nullify the things that are...

“When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him **crucified.** I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the **Spirit’s power**, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, **but on God’s power.”**

Those words from the Christian Church’s greatest missionary of all!

(1 Corinthians 1:26-28; 2:1-5)

God uses little lights.

- It’s just the way He has chosen to work His wonders.

Believers-- the Church of His beloved Son--

- are each attached to the unimpressive-**looking** power source

- of Word and Sacrament--

- and are strung together that we might provide

- a divine beauty for this dark world

- much more **real** and **lasting** even than

- the inspiring beauty

- of the most beautiful and brightly lighted Christmas tree.

One final point.

Please don't make the **mistake** of thinking that you **need to wait** to shine--

- maybe until you win that almost two billion dollar lotto,
- or receive that big promotion,
- or make it through whatever challenge that is sapping your energy.

You have light **right now**, with power from another source.

Let it shine **now** wherever you may be.

- Don't wait for **anything**.
- Don't put off knowing the fulfilling divinely given joy
- of **being used as a little Christ-like light** by almighty God.

“Let it shine, **all the time**, let it shine.”

Then Christmas won't ever be over

- for you
- or for those around you tonight--
- or even forever.

From the last book in the Bible, St. John's vision of heaven, the New Jerusalem, these words:

“The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. **The Lamb is its light.....** There shall be no night there. They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.” - Revelation 21

And **that little light of Christmas night** won't seem so little anymore, forever and ever. Amen.