



NightLight

A NEWSLETTER OF McLEAN MINISTRIES

"take heed....as to a light that shines in a dark place." II Peter 1:19

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Dear Friends,

*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,
hath shined in our hearts, to give the light
of the knowledge of the glory of God
in the face of Jesus Christ.*

2 Corinthians 4:6



You should receive this letter in the midst of Advent. Most of us, unless we attend a sacramental church, don't know much about Advent. Even in some church systems that should know better, Advent has been reduced to merely "Christmas lite". It is adorned with slightly less gaudiness than the later full Christmas decorations, and folks don't really have a clue why it is even celebrated.

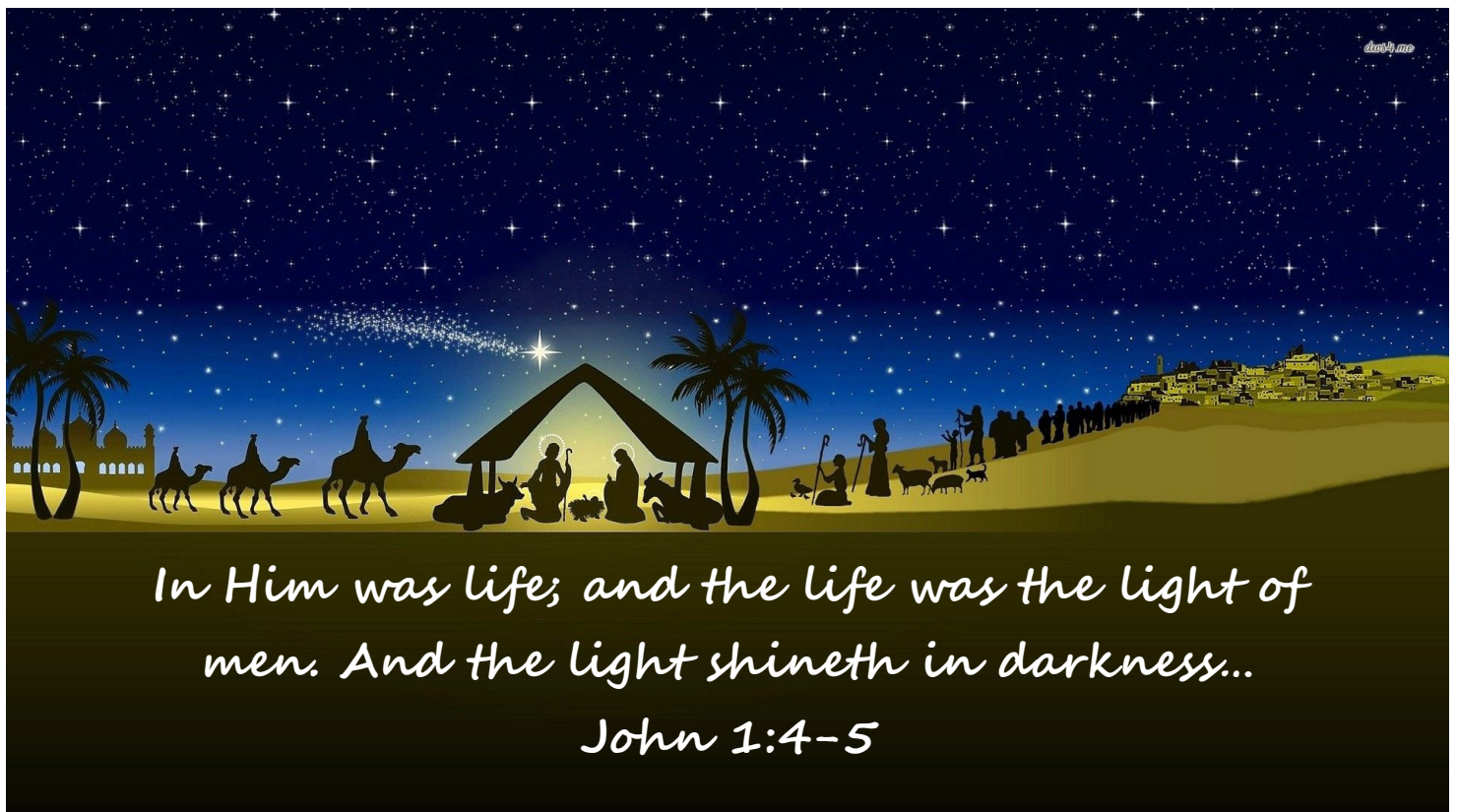
But if Advent was understood rightly it would not begin with similar twinkling shiny baubles as Christmas. When the ancient church acknowledged the days leading up to Christmas, the sanctuary was in shadows and bare. See, Advent begins in the dark. It was not meant to merely prepare people for the baby in the manger. Advent begins in the dark because these days leading up to the Incarnation and Nativity was a period for focusing on the condition of the world without the Messiah. The darkness preceding Christmas was of course a part of it. But the darkness of this age is the main focus. Advent begins in the dark because the world without the Light of the World was dark. The world was dark before Christmas, and that darkness will manifest itself in its full strength again, right before the Light of the World returns. As a star about to nova grows huge and angry red, so the darkness of this age will seek to puff itself up to its fullest height, but will proceed no further.

At the point of its greatest manifestation, the Son will rise and darkness will be vanquished forever.

One of the most loved Christmas songs we have was not written for Christmas. It was originally written by Isaac Watts for Advent and focuses on the Second Coming, not the first. (Of course it is appropriate for either.)

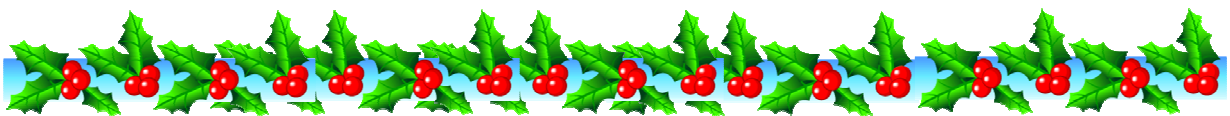
“Joy to the World, the Lord is come, let earth receive her King. Let every heart prepare Him room, and heaven and nature sing... He rules the world with truth and grace... No more let sin and sorrow grow... He comes to make His blessing known far as the curse is found...”

We rightly celebrate the coming of the baby in the manger on a dark silent night. How much more should we focus on the crucified risen King who's second coming will be the end of all darkness and the glory of eternal Morning!



Christmas T-shirts of Sorrow and Rage

I recently was walking the mall because it was too wet and cold to do my normal walk outside. I did something I never do (besides never walking the mall). I went into Spencer's gift store. For those who don't know Spencer's, it is the place where t-shirts and other rather odd paraphernalia are available. I have no idea why I turned in there because I know what kind of stuff they sell. But I wasn't prepared for the degree of degeneracy I saw regarding Christmas. I won't describe it, because I am not aiming at making you sick or angry. At first, that is all I felt. Then the Holy Spirit spoke to me. "This kind of demonic attack against the celebration of My first coming is because of deep unhealed hurt and rage inside those who would produce and propagate this stuff. Many hurts are related to sad Christmas memories or bad church experiences. It is not helpful to be angry. Pray for a great demonstration of my Real Love in the earth that will bring healing to the makers and sellers of such things." So, let's pray for that. And after we have prayed, let's purposefully look for people who wear those t-shirts and other things, and find ways to love them and be Christ to them. And I don't mean by that to be religious or preachy, which helped push them in that very direction. It is by being truly caring and serving them. This is how we keep Christ in Christmas. Not by treating Christmas like another political battleground, but by living out Christ in us, the hope of glory.





Closing Thoughts...

There are certain moments of this season that I cherish – like the candle lighting service, communion, and singing Christmas carols. But as precious as they all are, nothing is more treasured to me than being with my family. And I cannot help but think of those who are single or who have no one. Yes, we certainly should be thoughtful of the lonely all year long, but especially at Christmas. For it is at this time of year when things seem to be magnified, so that it makes good things better, and sadly, bad things worse. So loneliness is much worse. Ask the Holy Spirit to point out one person to you this season. Then reach out to them as He leads you. Maybe with a meal; maybe to just listen; maybe to blow leaves or shovel snow. Maybe even make a new friend. What better gift can we give but our time, our presence? Give yourself to another this Christmas just as God gave Himself to us the First Christmas.

Merry Christmas, Clay & Mary



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