

MARY DID YOU KNOW?

Pastor Colin Rieke ~ December 24, 2015

² The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. ⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9:2, 6-7)

Dear fellow pilgrims who have come to see the Light of the World,

A common fear for many people is nyctophobia – that is fear of the dark. It is a common fear especially among children, and even to a certain degree among adults as well. A bedroom closet is not fearful during the day, but at night it can become downright terrifying. A walk in the woods during the day can be peaceful and calming, but at night every miniscule sound is a creature waiting to pounce. It's no wonder then that the Bible often uses the images of darkness and light to describe the state of the world. It's no wonder then that a world lost in sin is described as dark, while a God-sent Savior is described as the light of the world.

It is this light that we remember specifically tonight in this our Christmas Eve Candlelight service. We are reminded of it with our Advent wreath and the lit Christ Candle in the center. But we can know all about what happened on that first Christmas night and still miss the point of Christmas. We can still miss the point that the now famous Christmas song, *Mary Did You Know?* makes. A point that is brought out by a line in the second verse of the song. Mary did you know when you kiss your little baby you kissed the face of God? Because it is the very fact that our Savior is also God that makes him the Light of the World. A light that Isaiah talked about, a light that was revealed that first Christmas night. It is the Light of

1. A great God
2. With great zeal

(1)

Seven hundred years before Mary and Joseph made the trek to Bethlehem, a prophet by the name of Isaiah was inspired by God to write the words we have before us in the first lesson. He wrote, **"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light, on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned."** Isaiah was referring to the light that would come with the Savior of the world being born. This is made clear by what he went on to say, **"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."**

Isaiah lived at a time when life was tough for the people of Israel. The threat of attack by neighboring nations was a constant concern for the people. But Isaiah's eyes saw beyond the physical and political darkness, to the spiritual darkness that enveloped the whole world. A darkness that could only be dispelled by the Light of the world.

To understand the importance of the Light of the World, we first need to understand the significance of the darkness which we find ourselves. It is not a physical darkness that God is speaking about. But it is the darkness of our unbelief. A darkness that started for the world when Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden. A darkness that started for us at our very own conception. The world is blanketed in this darkness of sin. This darkness was so dark, we knew nothing else, we could not escape it on our own, we had no source of light. Any attempts that we made to create a light in this darkness failed. All our efforts failed, even our efforts to know God. The darkness that we lived in guided our lives.

But even through the darkness, he has not left himself completely unknown. His greatness and his wisdom are seen all around us. When we look out at the world, it's the world he has created. When we look out at the beauty around us, this is his handiwork. He is a great God who created the stars with the breath of his mouth. He is a great God who is active in the miracle of every conception and birth. It is this great God who showed up on that Christmas night. He did not show up in majesty or power. But he showed up in the same way that all of us entered the world – as a little baby. His early hours were attended not by the 'who's who' of society, but rather some simple shepherds.

This was the Light of the World which appeared, a light we celebrate this Christmas evening. It is a light that could only come from a great God. For it is only a mighty God who would have the wattage to be able to shine a light brightly into all the world. For it is only a mighty God who would have the value to pay for our sins. For this little baby born in a manger in Bethlehem would grow up to be a man. He would grow up to do some amazing things, things that the song *Mary Did You Know* references. He gave sight to a blind man, he calmed the storms with his hand. And while these things were a part of who he was, it was not all that he was. Jesus himself would say, **"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."**

It is this light of the world which means we don't have to be afraid anymore – not afraid of the physical dark, and definitely not afraid of the spiritual dark that is our sins. Our sins have been banished to the darkness, paid for by the God-man Jesus Christ. Our great God has accomplished all of this.

(2)

In every Christmas I can remember, I've heard the story told from a number of different perspectives. But I wonder how often we think about Christmas from the perspective of God? We know and have heard the Christmas story from the perspective of the people who were involved – Mary, Joseph, the Shepherds, the wise men. But what was going on in the mind of God when Christmas was happening? Isaiah gives us a little clue as to what was happening and how God was feeling.

If we were to glance up to heaven and consider for a moment what was going on in the mind of God, I think we would see another beautiful picture. A picture about the zeal of our God. The first

lesson from Isaiah concluded with the words, “**The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.**” The simple definition for zeal is enthusiasm or passion for an objective. God demonstrated his zeal for all of us by sending his Son. It was God’s zeal that drove him to send Jesus, because he couldn’t be without us.

It was the great zeal of God that came up with a plan to satisfy his justice and his mercy. Because the same Jesus that we celebrate being born today, would grow up to live a perfect life, like only God could. He would go to the cross so that he could rule in our hearts forever. He would go to the cross, die and rise again to show his power over death. He would go to the cross so that we might not be afraid. This little baby boy born of Mary is the great light the prophet Isaiah talked about it. And you can be sure she knew it.

Did you know that since *Mary Did You Know* was composed and written in 1991, there have been at least 24 different artists and musicians who have performed some variation of that song? Artists like Clay Aiken, Rascal Flatts, & Pentatonix have each added their own spin on this popular song. But I wonder, as many of them are singing the words asking if Mary did indeed know who Jesus was, how many have considered the words themselves? How many of them know not only who Jesus was, but is now?

Mary herself knew exactly who her son was. She knew from the angel announcement and from the prophet Isaiah that her Savior would be called “**Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**” She knew when she kissed her little baby, that she was kissing the face of God. An amazing thought, but a wonderful thought. For as great as Jesus’ miracles were of making the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame leap and the dumb speak, all of them would have been for naught if Jesus were not the Light of the World.

His coming into the world is what gives our life meaning. Because it gives to us life with God in heaven. It is a light that is not just visible at one time of year, but shines throughout the year. He brings this light into our hearts so that we might share the light with others. We will have a visible demonstration of this at the end of our service when we light our candles from the Christ candle. I pray that the light of Christ might burn brightly in your hearts until that time when Christ will come back to take us to be with him. Amen.