

**SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS**  
**Commentary by Michael Sigler**  
**December 23, 2012**

**Live in the Light**

Read John 1:1-5 & Ephesians 5:1-2, 6-14

**Key verse: "Therefore, imitate God like dearly loved children" (Ephesians 5:1).**

*John 1:1-5*

When John began his exposition of the Incarnation in John 1, he chose a term that would communicate to both Jewish and non-Jewish readers. To the Jew, "the Word" spoke of the One God who spoke into existence all of creation. To John's Greco-Roman readers, "the Word" tapped into their idea of a working intelligence behind the created order. With both audiences in mind, John chose "the Word" as his name for Jesus Christ:

"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The Word was with God in the beginning. Everything came into being through the Word, and without the Word nothing came into being" (John 1:1-3).

In these few verses, John proclaims that Jesus Christ, born in Bethlehem, was and is God!

Next John tells us that this Jesus, the Word, brought the light of God into our dark world: "What came into being through the Word was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light" (John 1:4-5).

As I write this commentary, our world is reeling from the evil act of violence that claimed the lives of 20 innocent first-graders, plus faculty members, at an elementary school in Connecticut. We live in a dark world and, at such times, our faith is tested. We wonder, can God's light overcome the darkness that seems to increase around us?

When Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day," our nation was reeling from the dark night of Civil War. Bloodshed, death, and despair touched every American in one way or another. Even Longfellow's son Charles was wounded in battle. In those dark days, Longfellow wrote:

*And in despair I bowed my head;  
"There is no peace on earth," I said.*

*“For hate is strong, and mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, goodwill to men.”  
Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
“God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;  
The Wrong shall fail, the Right prevail,  
With peace on earth, goodwill to men.*

In our darkest days, we cling to God’s promise: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness doesn’t extinguish the light” (John 1:5).

#### ***Ephesians 5:1-2, 6-14***

It is one thing to believe that the light of Jesus will overcome the darkness in our world. We are right to believe that truth. But we must also remember that, when Christ comes to live in us by His Spirit, God calls us to live in such a way that *Jesus-in-us* helps dispel the darkness. We are called to live as “children of light” (Eph. 5:8).

How? This passage tells us that we live as children of light as we “imitate God like dearly loved children” (Eph. 5:1). Like parent, like child. And we live as children of light as we live our lives “with love, following the example of Christ, who loved us and gave himself for us” (Eph. 5:2). Christ-like love, sacrificial love, demonstrated in the lives of Christ’s followers is God’s way of overcoming the darkness of our world. We are called to live as “children of light.”

Ephesians 5:6-14 gives some practical advice about living as light in a dark world without being overcome by the darkness. For example, verses 10-11 exhort us: “Therefore test everything to see what’s pleasing to the Lord, and don’t participate in the unfruitful actions of darkness. Instead you should reveal the truth about them.”

We can’t dispel darkness by retreating from it. Yet, we must not let a dark world spread its darkness into us. Tim Goble said it this way: “It’s tough to be in the dark and not let the dark get in you. The unending struggle for the Christian is to walk in the light and at the same time keep moving into the shadows.”

This Christmas, we rejoice in The Word made flesh, in Jesus the Light of the world. We affirm our faith in God’s promise that “the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness doesn’t extinguish the light.” And we pray for grace to live faithfully “as children of light.”

Malcolm Muggeridge was a British journalist who came, later in his life, to faith in Christ. Muggeridge wrote in *Jesus Rediscovered*: “‘I am the light of the world,’ the founder of the Christian religion said. What a stupendous

phrase! And how particularly marvelous today, when one is conscious of so much darkness in the world! 'Let your light shine before men,' he exhorted us. You know, sometimes...someone asks me what I most want, what I should most like to do in the little that remains of my life, and I always nowadays truthfully answer—and it is truthful—'I should like my light to shine, even if only very fitfully, like a match struck in a dark, cavernous night and then flickering out,'"

(Contact Michael at [msigler@fumcfwb.com](mailto:msigler@fumcfwb.com))