

There's something about light. We are going through a three-week Epiphany sermon series on light in the book of Isaiah. Last week we talked about how light draws. That is, the Holy Spirit uses the light of Christ in the means of Word and Sacrament to draw the nations to Himself. Indeed the Holy Spirit gathers the Christian Church and He continues to do so, even when the opposite appears true.

Today we'll take a more pointed approach. Today we'll talk about how light pierces. How light works fascinates. Why is it that light can travel through glass but not a wall? Why does light shine through your hand if you shine a bright enough flashlight to it, but not a block of wood? What about high intensity light makes it able to kill germs and mold? Why is it that cockroaches scatter as soon as they sense light?

Looking at our text in Isaiah, we Isaiah prophesy of a servant of the Lord. We believe this is none other than Jesus Christ Himself. The servant says of Himself, “[God] **made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow; in his quiver he hid me away.**” Words cut. Words can hurt. Words pierce. 3. The servant's light pierces.

We see a picture of this same servant in Revelation. It is indeed an awesome sight to behold: “**from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.**” Imagine standing before such a figure. Light pierces, and the light of Jesus Christ shines a light on all aspects of your life. You would stand naked before Him with your past, present, and future revealed to Him as though He was simply looking at a poster. Your sins He knows. Your secrets He knows. Maybe we just got our answer as to why mold grows best in the darkness and cockroaches scatter in the light.

How does the Apostle John fare when he interacts with the glorified Jesus? As soon as He saw Him, he fell at His feet as though dead. Later this hour we get to come into the real presence of this awesome figure from Revelation 1. We do so when we come to Holy Communion. Encountering Christ at the communion rail, you kneel before this piercing light with all your life open before Him with nothing to hide. Maybe you're not so excited to participate in the Lord's Supper anymore.

Indeed, the Bible says elsewhere, “**For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.**” This servant's light pierces. And the light of Christ comes into contact with us through the Word of God that we have in the Bible.

And this Word acts like a bloodhound. You may try to cover the light, but it just makes your hand glow instead. Have you ever come to church and the readings were exactly what you needed to hear or were particularly convicting to you based on what you did last week?

Do you read the Bible during the week? I sure hope you do! But isn't it funny how sometimes the reading for the day pricks your conscience when you

consider your own life. It cuts you to the heart and makes you realize you don't measure up. Jesus is there in that word, working alongside the Holy Spirit to convict you.

Light pierces. And that's not such a bad thing. God's Word contains what we call law which cuts us to the quick and shows us how serious the sins we are committing.

A man who had a religious awakening returned to the Church. When the pastor asked him why he returned to church he said, "Pastor, I always knew that Jesus loved me! But it took the Holy Spirit showing me how much of a jerk I really was for me to realize *how much* Jesus loves me!"

Which brings us back to one of the centerpieces of our sermon series. In your Green Sheet inserts you see Luther's explanation to the third article of the creed which speaks of the Holy Spirit. Luther writes, "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith." Last week we focused on how the Holy Spirit gathers the Church. Today when we consider that light pierces, we consider that the 2. The servant's light enlightens.

As we read more into Isaiah 49, we see the purpose of our Heavenly Father making His Son's mouth a sharp sword. We see the reason why God's Word of Law cuts so deep. **"It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."**

For God, it isn't enough that Jesus came to save His people Israel. He is a light to lighten the Gentiles, that is, humans of every tribe, language, and people group.

To what purpose is it that throughout the Gospels, Jesus seems to have everybody's number? Look at our Gospel text, Jesus seems to be able to say just the right thing to John the Baptist, and He seems to be able to ask the right question to Andrew that inspires him not only to follow Jesus, but to bring his brother Peter along.

In Matthew through Luke, they record that right after Andrew and Peter were called, John and James the greater were also called, they were practically in the next boat over. John who was called by Jesus face to face is the same one who falls as though dead at the feet of the exalted Jesus in the book of Revelation, yet the same Jesus calls John in the Gospels and in Revelation.

Jesus, the servant prophesied of in Isaiah 49, the Rabbi in John chapter 1, the deity in Revelation 1, that's all the same guy. He's the one who knows you inside

out, and before whom you stand naked. There's nothing you can hide from Him. Light pierces. He uses this knowledge to save you. He knows every part of You, and He shines His light on you to forgive you. He shines this piercing light on you to kill all the mold that has been creeping in the corners of your life. He crushes the cockroaches before they scatter under the bed and into the cracks in the walls.

What does Jesus think of you? Maybe deep down we think that Jesus is disappointed or ashamed of us. It's important to understand that He uses His knowledge of our sins and imperfections so He can clean house, taking all our sins, guilt, and shame to the cross at Calvary to bear the reproach, penalty, and rejection for us. All that's left is Easter, where Christ clothes us in His perfection. What does Jesus think of you? Jesus knows you perfectly and loves you. That's what it means when the Holy Spirit enlightens us with His gifts.

For those of you who trust Jesus as your Savior, have been baptized, believe that you are indeed eating what the nails drove through and the spear pierced and drinking what poured from His side on the cross, and those who believe the same things that are taught in this church, as you go up to communion today, you don't need to be afraid, because you encounter the all-seeing God so that He can heal your woes. As you go up to the altar this morning, I want you to think of one sin that has been particularly bothering you in the past two weeks and as you partake of the true body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, leave it behind at the rail for Jesus to take and never be tormented by that sin again.

Finally, 1. The servant's light sanctifies. Our Heavenly Father calls this servant in Isaiah 49 “**one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers.**” If enlightening is the hazmat team opening up the windows and turning on the industrial grade UV lights to irradiate the black mold, then sanctification is the process of the mold slowly dying away.

Life by the Servant's light is not always easy. If it was tough for Jesus, it's tough for us also. As Jesus calls men and women, their lives are never the same after. Think of how different Andrew and Peters lives were before and after Jesus called them!

Light pierces, and as the Holy Spirit continues to use His Word of Law to convict us, and His Word of Gospel to assure us that Jesus loves us, forgives us, and has saved us, the Holy Spirit sanctifies us and keeps us in the true faith as He calls us to change our lives.

As we start a new year, God is challenging you to follow Him which means turning aside from sin. Throw away your idols of popularity, money, safety, family, or sports. Give up sinful habits. Continue to receive the gifts of God in public worship. You'll find that the servant of the Lord is more than happy to serve you as the Holy Spirit continues to draw you to Him. **THE LIGHT OF THE SERVANT'S WORD MAY STING, BUT IT BRINGS US TRUE LIFE.**