

**PARK HILL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT
REV. JOHN L. THOMPSON
“THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE”
John 1:6-8, 19-28
December 14, 2008
8:45 & 11:00 A.M. Services**

We're getting closer to Christmas. Our boys and girls are excited about the presents they will be receiving. Maybe some of us adults are excited, too.

The writer of the Gospel of John refers to Christ as the light of the world. His was the voice of one calling in the desert, ***“Make straight the way for the Lord.”*** John was a very popular preacher, so popular that he, like Jesus, raised concern among the Pharisees. Who was he and by what authority did he preach and baptize? John assured the Pharisees that he was not the awaited messiah. Instead, he was the one preparing the way for the messiah. In the words of John's Gospel, ***“He came as a witness to testify concerning [the] light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.”*** The light, of course, was Jesus. The celebration of Advent is the celebration of light coming into our dark world.

When John wrote his Gospel the world was in darkness. He wanted the world to know that a light had penetrated that darkness. A Savior had come. Jesus is the light of the world. That's the good news for this third Sunday in Advent. The light that enlightens all humankind has come into the world in the person of the Christ child. Anyone who has ever been lost on a dark night knows what a welcome relief light is.

Just when the world most needed God's light, a babe was born in Bethlehem of Judea. Jesus is the light that shined in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. That message is made clear in this celebration of Advent. Try as it might the world cannot extinguish Christ's light. The light that was laid in the manger . . . it never stopped shining. And it never will.

The light of Christ--it never stops shining. Wars, pestilence, famine, good times and bad, that light continues to shine. Our grandparents saw its glow in the darkest hours of the depression. Our soldiers saw its glow even on distant battlefields. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

The world cannot extinguish the light of Christ. That light shines in prison camps. It shines in hospital rooms and funeral parlors. It shines amidst poverty and every manner of heartache and hardship. Nothing can stop it. Life nor death nor powers nor principalities, nor anything in all creation, if I might paraphrase Paul, can stop the light of Christ, the light of God's love for humanity from penetrating the darkness. You can try burying it in the ground and it will still break through. As John declares so beautifully in verses 4 and 5 of this chapter, ***"In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it."*** Jesus is the light of the world. That light cannot be extinguished.

But let me share one thing more. The greatest privilege in the world is to share that light with someone else. **"This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine; this little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine."** John was not the light. He came to bear witness to the light. That is our job as well.

That is a job that occurs at Park Hill all the time. It happens when the Youth of the Church prepare meals for the Senior Citizens each month. It happens when the members of the church mobilize to feed the homeless in Five Points. It happens whenever the choir sings, whenever we gather for worship. It happened when 60 members of the church banded together to fund a housing unit in LoDo for families going through transition. It will happen today, as it did yesterday, when hundreds of needy families will be welcomed into our church to do their Christmas shopping for their children in a program sponsored by Warren Village. It will happen again on Saturday, December 20th when families will come by the hundreds for a toy giveaway sponsored by the East Denver Collaborative, of which our church is a member. It will happen this evening when we gather for the Festival of Lights, right here in our sanctuary. It happened when the young people of the church served the United Methodist Women last week. It happened last week when our entire church staff came together to help us all celebrate the life of one of our young adults who left us far too soon. We let our lights shine as we said goodbye to Larry Flores.

What a great gift for someone who might otherwise have to sit in the darkness. What a gift to give someone--the gift of light. Do you understand that this is our call as followers of Jesus Christ, to shine his light into the lives of anyone who is sitting in darkness? John was not the light, but he came to bear witness to the light. That light was Christ, who is the life and the light of the world. And now we have the same privilege that John the Baptist had. **“This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine; this little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine . . . Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.”** That’s our job when we leave this room. Let the light of Christ shine through us.

Yes, we’re getting closer to Christmas. And the closer we get, the more exciting it becomes. **“This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine; this little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine . . . Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.”**

I hope it shines enough to convince you that I would love to be your pastor. I would love for this to be your church.