

Theme: **A Light with a Special Purpose**

Text: Romans 1:1- 7

Season: 3rd Wednesday Advents Service

Date: December 13, 2017

Place: Shepherd of the Rockies Lutheran, Bailey, CO

Grace and peace to you as you let the light of God shine in your life, from God, our Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

During these Advent services we have listened to the Apostle Paul tell us about the hope, peace and joy of our Christian life as we have related it to the traditions of the Christmas tree. We talked about the importance of the routine of preparing for the coming of Christ in the past and for the future, like the routine of picking out a Christmas tree and bring it into the house. Last week we talked about putting on the light of God as our armor and guide in the darkness of this world, just like the lights on the Christmas tree. We talked about how our faith unites us together so that we can shine even brighter in this world of darkness declaring the Hope, Peace and Joy that God that has given to us through the life, death and resurrection of God's only Son, Jesus Christ.

As we look at the Christmas tree with the lights on we can see the chrismon and other ornaments stand out on the Christmas tree. (Turn off the lights.) When the lights are turned off though, all the ornaments are lost in the darkness of the tree. (Turn on the lights.) When the lights are turned on, the lights make the ornaments stand out. Each of the lights shine on the chrismon ornaments to make them illuminate, bring attention to them. Each of the chrismons on this tree reflect the light of God and tell us something about God's character. As Christians we are connected to the source of light in this world, Jesus Christ, and we become the light in the world with a special purpose of proclaim the hope, peace and joy that God has given to us, which is His loving characteristics.

The Apostle Paul in the opening of the book of Romans telling us how God made him to be a special light to shine the gospel of God in this world as he says: "**Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God.**" (Rom 1:1) The Apostle Paul didn't choose to be a servant of Christ, his chosen life was to be the Pharisee of Pharisees and he was well along the way of becoming just that when Jesus Christ, the light of God, shone in his life and set him apart for the gospel of God. We to have been set apart by the light of God as the Apostle Paul reminds us, "**To all those ... who are loved by God and called to be saints; Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord, Jesus Christ.**" (Rom. 1:7)

Yes, we are loved by God and called to be His saints, but that's where there is a lot of confusion and misunderstanding in the hearts and minds of people today. The world would want us to believe that we in ourselves are wise enough and strong enough to make our own choices, to take the initiative to be good and worthy first, long before God would even consider loving us. In fact the world would tell us that we have to accomplish our sainthood and thus earn the right to be loved by God. (Turn off the lights.) Without God in our lives we are just like the lights on this Christmas tree without any source of power, we are in the dark and our knowledge of God is also in the dark. That's where the Apostle Paul found himself when the light of the world shone in his life along the way to Damascus. In the book of Romans, the Apostle Paul reminds us, "**All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.**" (Rom 3: 23 - 24) (Turn on the lights)

God had each of us on His mind when He sent His Only Son into this world to make us a light in the world of darkness with a special purpose. The Apostle Paul reminds us of that Good News, as he tells us, "**Jesus Christ our Lord was promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead.**" (Rom 1:3-4) Yes, this Good News message centers on Jesus Christ, who was born of a humble mother and laid in a manger. Born to fulfill God's first promise to Adam and Eve - to send a Savior, the Seed of a woman, to rescue all mankind from their sins. Born to suffer and die with the burden of every one of our sins laid upon Him on the Cross of Calvary. Born to die and be laid in a tomb. But God's grace did not send His Only Son into this world to be born and die with the same dead end that all mankind deserves, No, instead after He paid for all our sins He opened the grave and destroyed death for all of us who believe in His resurrection.

All that Christ has done for us is found symbolized in the 10 different Christmas ornaments hanging on this tree. As a light of God in this world we reflect the light of God on all that God has done for us so that others may come to know the hope, peace and joy that God has given to us all. The Apostle Paul reminds us of this as he says, "**having received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of His name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.**" (Rom 1:5-6)

What have you been called to proclaim in this world as a special light of God called to belong to Jesus Christ? Well let's look at the 10 Chrismon ornaments found on this tree to refresh our minds and hearts about what they tells us about God and what we should be telling the world.

The Latin Cross or the crucifixion Cross – This cross should reminds us that the baby born in Bethlehem on Christmas morning was born to die for all our sin so that we would be freed for all our sins, death and the power of the devil. As we see this empty cross we are reminded to tell the world that Jesus Christ not only die for each of us but He rose from the grave to give us a pathway to heaven, our eternal home.

The Greek Cross – This cross should remind us that all the world, God's people from the north, the south, the east and the west all needs to know about the birth, the life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ for that is the true source of hope, peace and joy that God has given to the four corners of the world.

The Anchor Cross – This cross should remind us that all the hope of the world comes from the Christ Child going to the cross for us so that we can be anchored on the solid rock foundation of Jesus Christ in the midst of all the storms of this world. For it is by holding onto the cross of Christ that we find the anchor that will give us hope, peace and joy when the storms of this world come upon us.

The Eternal Cross – This cross should remind us that through the Cross of Christ we have eternal life. As we keep our eyes focused on the Cross of Christ we will find our special purpose in this world by helping other to get and keep their focused on the eternal life given to us by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Alfa & Omega Cross - This cross should remind us that God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have been with us from the beginning and will be with us to the end. God has no beginning and no end but is eternal. His eternal love for us prepared our redemption and gives us eternal hope, peace and joy in this world and in the world to come.

Christ's Shepherd Staff - The X or CHI in Greek on this Shepherd's staff tells us that this is Christ's Shepherd Staff. The staff that He uses to guide us through life and protect us from our enemies, who would want to destroy us. As we let Christ be our Good Shepherd He will lead us out of the valley of death into the green pastures and still water of our heavenly home.

The Crown – The crown found upon this Christmas tree is there to remind us that the Baby born in Bethlehem was born to be a king, for He is the king of the world, but He was only

crowned just before He was crucified for all our sins. Still by His blood we are made right with God and washed of all our sins so that we now and for all eternity can have the hope, peace and joy of knowing that we are a part of the kingdom of God.

The Fish – The spelling of fish in Greek gives you the acronym for Jesus Christ God’s Son our Savior. This symbol was used by the early Christians to identify the meeting place for the Christians gatherings, when they were under persecution. Today this symbol is being used to identify yourself as a believer in Jesus Christ as your savior.

The Butterfly – The Butterfly is the symbol of Jesus Christ life, death and resurrection. It is also the symbol of our hope in the resurrection for as the butterfly lives as a caterpillar and then sleeps in the state of a cocoon before becoming a Butterfly. So, we to will live in this world for a time, then resting in our grave for a time and then become resurrected to live in our heavenly home forever.

The Angel – An Angel appeared to Mary and Joseph telling them of the Christ Child that was going to be born to them. The Angels announced the birth of the Christ Child to the Shepherd. God also sends His angels to protect us and watch over us. Angels are a big part of the birth and resurrection of Jesus Christ announcing the good new of His birth and resurrection.

As we hold onto the light of God given to us we shine on all that God has done, is doing and will be doing in our lives, so that the world can come to recognize the hope, peace and joy that God is giving to us by His love for us. Just like the Apostle Paul we have been set apart and are called to be a light with a special purpose in this world, to shine the light of God in the darkness of this world. Jesus says to us, **“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand and it gives light to all the house. In the same way let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”** (Mt 5:14-16)

You have been given a special purpose in this world to let the light of God shine through you so others may know God’s love and have hope, peace and joy that He wants to give to them. Amen.