

# JOHNS CREEK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## Leave the Light On

John 1:1-14

### Christmas Eve Sermon 2021

Rev. Dr. Charley Reeb, Senior Pastor

---

Welcome and Merry Christmas!

Christmas for me is extra special this year because my 4-year-old son Paul is at that perfect age for Christmas. I'm seeing Christmas through his eyes this year and it's so much fun.

Children have a way of changing your perspective.

The other day I was trying to get Paul dressed for the day in the living room. He only had his pants on and was running around like 4 years old do. I said, "Paul, get over here. Let me get your shirt on and help you with your socks and shoes."

He kept running around. The more I asked, the more he ran around. He was taking advantage of me because Mom is usually the one who does this routine and she is an expert at it.

Well, suddenly he stopped and said, "Alexa, play Bad Romance by Lady Gaga." I couldn't believe it! How does he know that song? And he sang along and danced around the room!

I said, "Alexa, stop music! Paul get over here and let me dress you." He said, "But why? Do I have school today?"

Suddenly, I realized it was a Saturday. We had nowhere to go, nothing to do. I had no meetings to attend, no sermons to write. I was just so used to hurrying, so preoccupied with so many thoughts, so trapped on this treadmill of moving from one task to another. And right there in front of me my son was showing me life, light and joy, and I was missing it.

So I said, "Alexa, play..." And we got up and he and I danced to Lady Gaga together....

We can get so busy and stressed that we forget to enjoy God's blessings in life. We forget to enjoy the life and light God has given us.

Ironically, this happens most often during the Christmas season. The most wonderful time of the year often turns

into the most stressful time of the year. Parties to attend. Packages to wrap. Christmas cards to write. Dinners to plan. Expectations to meet. **Negotiating Covid in the midst of all of it.** How does anyone remain sane through it all? Maybe some of you don't think you have!

Well, tonight let me help all of us get our sanity back. Hear this:

***"Let's not get so busy making Christmas special that we forget what makes it special."***

What makes Christmas special? My son Paul reminded me when he was dancing around the other day. He refused to let his light go out. He was demonstrating the power of Christmas without even realizing it.

Let me read to you what the gospel of John says about Christmas:

**The true light, which enlightens everyone, is coming into the world...The light shines in the darkness did not overcome it.**

Christmas is about the light of Christ penetrating a dark world. Jesus said "I am the light of the world!" And his light is so powerful that darkness will never overcome it – not darkness of sin, death, or suffering. Christmas is celebrating the invincible light of Christ!

And you want to know something amazing? When we believe in Jesus and follow him he puts his light within us so we can let it shine. In the same chapter of John, it says, **"To all who received Jesus, who believed in him, he gave the power to become children of God."**

What is that power? To shine the light of Jesus in the world!

I believe that's what Jesus had in mind when he commanded, **"Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."** –Matthew 5:16

Why do you think lighting a candle is the highlight of

the service? Don't throw your light in a box with your candle when you leave tonight. Take that light with you into the world.

The world needs this desperately. It has been a tough year, and, if we are honest, many of our lights have gone dim. Some of our lights have gone out. If there ever was a time the world needed our light to shine it is now!

Maybe you don't know if you can share that light. You're tired. You're exhausted. You're discouraged... how?

How do we do that? By remembering how powerful and invigorating it was when someone shared their light with you.

In 1997, Fred Rogers was presented with a lifetime achievement award by The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for his work on "Mister Rogers Neighborhood," which ran from 1968 to 2001. When he got up on stage, he didn't do the typical acceptance speech. He had the audience do an exercise. He said:

*"So many people have helped me to come here to this night. Some of you are here, some are far away and some are even in Heaven.*

*All of us have special ones who loved us into being.*

*Would you just take, along with me, 10 seconds to think of the people who have helped you become who you are, those who cared about you and wanted what was best for you in life.*

*"Whomever you've been thinking about, how pleased they must be to know the difference you feel they have made."*

I'd like for you to do that exercise right now. Take a few seconds and think about those who loved you into being – those people who have made you who you are – those who have shared their light with you.

There is nothing more attractive, more healing, more transforming than sharing the light, love and kindness of Christ. We all know that personally because we have experienced that light from others. Christmas comes around every year to remind us to be the light for others.

Is there someone in your life who needs your light? The best way to celebrate Christmas is to leave your light on

for others. It doesn't take much. Remember Jesus was born in a small and simple manger which means God can use the smallest of things to shine his light through us.

Bruce Wilkinson, in his book, *You Were Born for This*, writes about a young lady he knows named Lauren who was staying at a swanky hotel in New York City for two weeks on business. Every morning when she went to work out in the hotel gym she would say hello to a petite Hispanic lady on staff at the hotel named Marta. Every time Lauren greeted her, Marta would just light up.

One afternoon Lauren went shopping and felt the Spirit nudge her to buy something for Marta. She put together a gift basket filled with bath salts, candles, and lotions. When Marta received the gift, she was overwhelmed. She said, "I can't thank you enough. I am so tired at the end of the day. This will help me so much."

A couple of days before Lauren was to leave New York she received a beautiful bouquet of flowers from her husband. She enjoyed the flowers but the last day she was there she gave them to Marta.

Marta grabbed Lauren's hand and said, "You have no idea what you have meant to me the last two weeks. No one ever notices me but you have. For the last two weeks I have looked forward to coming to work because I knew you would smile at me and say hello. Then you gave me all these gifts. You noticed me and now I know that God notices me."

You know what love is? Someone once said it is "revealing to someone else that person's own beauty." It is shining your light on someone's beauty. Loving is showing someone else how beautiful he or she is. A person cannot discover this alone, another human being is needed. When one human being shows another human being how beautiful they are, then love happens.

Imagine if every Christian in this world (that's 2.2 billion people, over 30 percent of the world's population) got up every day, and said, "Today I am going to leave my light on. I am going to shine my light on the beauty of others. I am going to let my love light shine." Can you imagine? It would be a different world!

Unfortunately, many Christians hide their lights under a bushel by favoring judgment over grace, hate over love, rules over relationships, dogma over forgiveness, and despair over hope.

Jesus did not say let your judgment and opinions shine so that no one in the right mind would want to be a Christian.

Too many Christians are known by their opinions than their love for others. They are known by casting shadows of darkness rather than reflecting the light of Christ.

Bob Goff said, “Only Jesus has the power to change people, and it will be harder for them to see Jesus if their view of him is blocked by our big opinions.”

When we uncover our light by removing our judgments and opinions we will be a lot more attractive to the world. Believe me, there is nothing more attractive than the gospel. Our message is the most attractive message in the world! God created us, loves us, redeemed us and wants a relationship with us.

Madalaine L’Engle said,

**“We draw people to Christ not by loudly discrediting what they believe, by telling them how wrong they are and how right we are, but by showing them a light that is so lovely that they want with all their hearts to know the source of it.”**

You see, the Christmas spirit is not insisting that people say “Merry Christmas!” The Christmas Spirit is not saying, “Keep Christ in Christmas.” The Christmas Spirit is not just saying “Jesus is the reason for the season.” The Christmas spirit is being Christmas to others. What does that mean? It means sharing your light with others – the light that came into the world 2,000 years ago.

Some years ago, the light refused to go out in the small town of Wauconda, Illinois, a small town with a population of 6,500. King Duncan writes, “For the past 45 years the town had placed two large illuminated crosses on the city water towers during the Christmas season. Then the town council received a threat. Someone was going to sue the city if the crosses were erected in the coming Christmas season, based on the separation of church and state. The town council grudgingly took them down.

“But that’s when the citizens of Wauconda took matters into their own hands. They didn’t

counter-sue. Nor did they organize angry protests... They decided to honor the missing crosses by placing lighted reminders of Christ on their own property. All over the community, the citizens of Wauconda put up lighted crosses and nativity stars and manger scenes and trees draped in lights. They put up so many lights that you could see Wauconda from the interstate freeway! Wauconda looked like an entirely different town. All night it was as bright as day because the people decided to turn on the lights of Christmas.

For the love of Christmas, leave your light on and light it shine. The world is desperate for it.



11180 Medlock Bridge Road Johns Creek, GA 30097  
770-497-8215 [www.johnscreekumc.org](http://www.johnscreekumc.org)