

# To see the light

## Pastor Samuel Turkson

*Key Phrase:* The whole world needs the Light that is in us

*Key Verse:* John 1:19

"Look! There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"

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There is within each of us a deep, almost primitive fear of the darkness. You remember how it was as little children when we were afraid of the dark and needed a night-light, or someone to come and reassure us. Most of us outgrow this, but sometimes something happens to remind us that the fear is still there. If you ever have been caught between floors in a dark elevator during a power failure then you know something of the overwhelming feeling of panic and terror total darkness can cause. In his book, "**Alone**," the explorer Admiral Richard E. Byrd contends that there is nothing more conducive to panic than the loss of sight. He describes what happened to a member of his expeditionary party when their plane crashed:

*I shall never forget the agony in Floyd Bennett's voice when we pulled him terribly smashed up from the debris of our crash landing. "I'm done for, I am finished" he whispered. "I can't see anything."*

We don't like to think about it, but every now and then something reminds us of the darkness which seems always ready to move in and overwhelm us. If you can sense that even a little bit now, you can begin to feel the incredible joy that is present in the Bible from the first book to the last. One of the dominant themes of scripture is the incredible Good News of a God who loves us so much that He gives us light. He sends light, unfailing light, to overcome the darkness of our lives. As you read the Books of the Bible you feel the joy and the wonder of this experience of light that the authors have been caught up in—just like the kind of experience Admiral Byrd goes on to describe. (Bennett had whispered "I'm done for. I can't see anything.") Byrd continues: "His face was a smear of oil. When I wiped it away and he could see again, the expression that transfigured his face was beautiful to behold." And that is exactly what the Bible writers do for us. They wipe away the oil and they make it possible for us to see the light and to feel the transfiguring joy and wonder of God's gift of life.

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This importance of light is very common throughout the Bible. In the beginning, the first thing God did was to create light because everything was covered with darkness. "Let there be light ... and there was light. God saw how good the light was, then separated the light from the darkness" (Gen.1:3). He had to have light! We had to have light.

In the Book of Psalms, we read, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" (Ps.27:1). The Prophet Job, in the midst of all his suffering and questioning, still manages to say, "By His light I walked through darkness" (Job.29:3). Isaiah, thinking about the coming of the Messiah, spoke these beautiful words that almost sing themselves to us when we hear them: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light... Upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone" (Is.9: 1-4). And, not surprisingly, when we come to the New Testament, we find the climax to all of this. Jesus becomes the bright and shining light of God's love. Nowhere is this more beautifully expressed than in our Gospel text. The Beloved Disciple, John, has seen the light and joyfully exclaims, "**Look! There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world**" (Jn.1:29). All of the love and mercy of God is given unconditionally to mankind in the person of Jesus the Christ, the Lamb of God and the Light of the World. St. John describes this as **the-flesh** revelation of God's love and mercy for His human creatures as the "real light which gives light to every man" (Jn.1:9).

*There is a real darkness that surrounds us physical beings. There is a mystery about us. We don't know everything there is to understand about what life is. We don't comprehend all there is to comprehend about why we act the way we do-the constant fluctuations of mood, for example. Why do we get depressed for no apparent reason? Why do we lash out and hurt the people we love so much? Why do we do the things we do? There are so many unanswered questions: And where are we going with it all? What happens when we die? "What's it all about, Andreas? What's it all about, Tanja?" For some people, the inability to find answers to these questions is so threatening that they become suicidal.*

Psychologists have discovered that every single thing that happened to us in our lives, even as tiny little children, was recorded in our experience and can never be erased. We've learned that these experiences and the feelings that went along with them are constantly being replayed. Just a little word or gesture can call it all back! In his book, "Human Like Me Jesus," **Malcolm Boyd** has written a prayer by an adult who is reliving a night in his life as a child. During the first part of the prayer he is terribly frightened because there is a woman baby-sitter who is loving and kindly toward him when his parents are present but who becomes very mean and abusive when they leave. Unfortunately, his parents won't believe him when he tries to tell them about her.

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After the parents go out, he lies awake, unable to sleep because he fears that the mean baby-sitter, a large formidable-looking woman, will come into his room. The prayer continues,

*I finally must have fallen asleep and then suddenly as if they had just begun speaking, two voices broke into my hearing. They were angry. I listened harder. They belonged to my father and mother. I almost jumped out of bed to run into their room, I was so happy they had come home. The stout woman must have gone away. I was safe again. But the anger in their voices warned me ... I could not hear what words they were saying to each other until my mother said she could not stand it any longer. My father swore at her. I heard a crash. What happened? Was one of them hurt? I heard a door slam and there was silence in the next room, except for my mother crying. The next morning I saw what had crashed. It was a glass, covering a photograph of my father ... All the next day the mood in the house was terrible. No one talked. I was treated as a child who did not know what happened. That night my father and mother talked to me ... they were going to separate, my mother said ... My father took me up on his lap to hold me. He said they both wanted me to be happy. Would I decide which one of them I wanted to live with? The next day, running through the ocean waves at the beach, with the sand beneath my toes and in my eyes and mouth, I felt like my heart had closed in upon itself. How much can a child stand-Jesus?*

That kind of experience is the coming of darkness, and it is forever recorded. Such things happen to us, as children, as young adults, and as adults. We feel the darkness closing in. We feel the threat of it. We don't know how to deal with it. Then God, in His great love, sends the Light! Let there be light at the center of this darkness! And the light that is given is the Spirit of Christ within us. It is a form of energy, a form of power. Light (ordinary light) is a form of energy or radiation which stimulates the nerve endings in our eyes. You can get as complicated as you like trying to go further with it, but it really comes back to that simple definition. How beautiful to think of Christ, the Light of the World, in this way: energy, radiation, power from God Himself, stimulating all the nerve-endings of our lives, making it possible for us to see: to penetrate the darkness; to begin to put things into place; to begin to see what life is all about! More than that, it is a power that gives us the strength to cope, the strength to live, the strength to live creatively, the strength to love unconditionally.

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At this very moment, the light of Christ's Spirit is shining at the center of your being. Drop your defences! Relinquish all the excuses! Let the light shine through! Let it permeate your life! Let the new life and the healing come into every part of your being! You'll begin to see. You'll begin to feel. You'll begin to come alive! This is the gift of light that God gives to each one of us in Christ.

This light that is within us is given to us not to hide under a bushel, as Jesus put it. The whole world needs the light that is in us. The world out there with all its problems, needs to be illumined by the light of Christ that shines within us. To understand this and to be able to take it seriously, we must first open up the window of our heart so that we can see what the Beloved Disciple John saw when he cried out,

Look! There is the Lamb of God

who takes away the sin of the world.

The real light which gives light to every man ...