

**The Light Will Shine on Us****Jan. 23, 2011****Isaiah 9:1-4**

But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness---on them light has shined.

You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

Taking time to watch a sunset is a wonderful way to relax at the end of a day. It can be a time to take a deep breath, to relax and think about something bigger than yourself, to think about something besides your problems.

It can be a time of prayer, a time to reflect on the blessings God has given you, a time to think back over the day and recognize where you have seen God acting in your life, a time to think about how God loves you and cares for you!

Watching the sky first turn orange and pink,  
watching high clouds catch the last rays of the sun and  
turn bright colors and then fade into darkness, we can  
watch the first stars appear.

The night can be beautiful.

But sometimes, darkness is not something we  
welcome.

Sometimes, darkness is frightening, lonely, filled with  
tears and despair, sorrow and grief.

When June Hart passed away on Monday, she was the fifth person connected with this church who had passed in exactly one month.

Faye Harsh, up in Sacramento, passed away on Dec.

17. Rev. David Pasamonte, a former pastor and a relative of many of you, passed away on Dec. 30.

Mrs. Vickie Jensen and Rowena's father-in-law, Dr.

William Cappiello both passed away on Jan. 6.

And now June is gone as well.

That's a lot of loss in a very short time, and I find my heart heavy. I know many of you have heavy hearts as well.

For those of us who are grieving, it can seem like the light has gone out of our lives just as surely as it goes out of the sky when the sun goes down.

The darkness of grief can be oppressive.

Happiness is hard to find in the dark of grief, and so are hope and joy. Sometimes it can even be hard to feel the presence of God through the oppressiveness of grief.

Making it worse is that we often don't even take time to grieve. Our society seems to give us limited time to "get over it." Grief is not supposed to last very long.

And so we suppress our grief, and that somehow makes it even more oppressive.

Isaiah wrote these words -----

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light....for the yoke of their burden, ....the rod of their oppressor, you have broken...."

Isaiah spoke these words to the people of Judah who were living in the darkness of political oppression, but these words of good news from the prophet also have meaning for us who are living in the darkness of grief.

We are the people who are walking in darkness.

The light will shine on us.

This is going to come up again, so let's practice it a couple of times---When I say

We are the people who are walking in darkness, you say  
the light will shine on us.

I made this the sermon title so you can have it in front of you if you want a reminder.

We are the people who walk in darkness

The light will shine on us.

We have only to find the will and the strength to lift up our eyes from the shadow of death to see the Light of the World shining on us.



The people of Judah rejoiced and celebrated when, by God's grace, a new king was at last seated on the throne of David. The oppression they had known was broken, and the oppression of grief that many of us are feeling today will be broken as well.

We also can find reason to rejoice and celebrate. We can find our way out of the darkness of grief and sorrow by hanging on to Christ our light.

Christ came to save us from sin and death. Christ came to be the Light of the World, shining in the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

I am convinced that when June died, when anyone dies, Jesus comes to take them to their eternal home. I know that many of you are convinced of the same thing.

But we still miss them, grieve for them, cry many tears because our hearts are broken when they are gone.

We hardly have strength sometimes to look up and see Jesus.

But even the darkest night ends with the  
dawn!

We will see Jesus standing before us like the sun  
comes up over the mountains, bright and clear.

It will be a sudden sunrise, as if the earth turned faster  
for a moment and the sun is immediately above the  
horizon.

The light may blind us for a moment, and then we  
will know that

we are the people who walk in darkness,

The light will shine on us!

The light of Christ will break over us, breaking the oppression of grief and lifting our burden of pain.

Once again we will know that we are the children of light, walking in the light of the Lord.

And we will rejoice before God, giving thanks for comfort, for grace, for mercy and light.

Today we can trust God to bring us to that time.

We can help each other see that light by giving each other comfort and love and support.

We can make this place a safe place to share our feelings, to grieve together, to remind each other that Christ loves us very much.

We can be light and hope and grace and mercy to each other.

We can be the body of Christ, shining in the darkness of the world.

Today we are the people who walk in darkness,

The light will shine on us!

Yes, one day soon the light will shine on us once again, and we will see the Light of the World leading us on into the future. And we will once again know that we are saved from the oppression and the darkness of grief and sorrow.

It may be dark for us now, but the dawn is coming. Believe and hope, for the light will shine on us!

Amen.