

John 1:9 The real light that shines on everyone.

Is it me, or are there more light displays on homes and businesses this year? As you go for a walk or take a drive, it seems like there are lights up nearly everywhere. Some are only a few strands. Others are clearly trying to be visible from outer space! Stores are all but wiped out of Christmas lights and there's still a week to go until Christmas.

Its almost as if people have more time on their hands to put up lights, or that there's more darkness in the world and they feel the need to light things up a bit. Oh wait, both are probably true for most people: more time and more darkness...and don't we all know it?

I have to admit that the lights are kind of a mixed bag for me. I love seeing the lights shining in the darkness, but the need for the lights in the first place weighs on my heart and mind. You probably know what I mean. We all like seeing the pretty twinkling lights...but the darkness of real life...is right there.

Real life is not about a merry little Christmas, hearts light, and troubles out of sight. You can't cover real life in wrapping paper. You can't wash it away with a bottle, or pretend it isn't there with a pill. And even if you think you've found something to push away the pain, lift the guilt, or light up the darkness, real life has a way of popping back up, piling back on, pulling back on the progress.

Because real life is about hurt and heartache. Real life is about separation and isolation. Real life is about loss and loneliness. Real life is about anxiety and sadness. Real life is about suffering and death. Real life is dealing with the effects of

sin in our hearts, in our lives, and in this world. You know as well as I do, no matter how many lights you hang from your gutters, they can't twinkle enough beat back all that darkness, the darkness of real life.

But there was a man, sent from God, whose name was John. He came as an eyewitness to testify about... light. (1 John 1:6) Not candlelight, not sun light, not streetlight, not even twinkling Christmas light. He came to point us to ***the real light that shines on everyone.*** Real light for real life.

Think about it, all light for us in this world is the result of something else. Those twinkling Christmas lights are the result of electric current flowing through the right apparatus so that photons are released, coloring what we see. Candlelight is possible through heat, vaporized elements, and oxygen. Sunlight is just a version of the same...times several billion.

But John was sent to talk about real light for real life. That word for *real* in the original Greek, is an interesting word. Greek has two words for what we understand as real or true. The Greek could have indicated that the light lines up with the reference. It would be like me asking you to turn on a particular light and you turn on the light I meant. We might say the *right* light. But the word used here has more of the idea of the real deal, the genuine article, the reality corresponding to the concept, the original, the dependable light. In other words, all other "light" is either imitative or reflective of the one and only.

Jesus said it of himself: ***I am the Light of the World*** (John 8:12) and the Apostle John further explained it, ***God is light. In him there is no darkness at all.*** (1 John 1:5) This is ***the light shining in the darkness, and*** (as our second reading put it), ***the darkness has not overcome it.*** (John 1:5) It can't. After all, darkness is the absence of light. As soon as there is light,

the darkness gives way – ***the real light that shines on everyone***, Jesus, ***the light of the World***.

He is real light for real life. It is the light of his peace that heals your hurts and heartaches. It is the light of his presence that surround you in your isolation and separation. It the light of his joy overpowers your anxieties and lifts you from your sadness. It is his light of life that makes sense of your suffering and promises that death is not the end, but the beginning of eternal light and life. It is the light of his grace that forgives our sins and empowers us for new life in him. It is the light of his love that lifts spirits, calms minds, comforts hearts, changes lives, and brings us together into the Light, real light, for real life, ***the real light that shines on everyone***, especially you.

Heavenly Father, you have called us out of darkness into your wonderful light. When the darkness creeps into our minds and hearts, remind of us Jesus, who is our light and life. Help us to see your light at work in us that we may give thanks for your loving purposes in our daily activities, our quiet moments, and especially in the midst of our struggles. Use those little Christmas lights, twinkling in the darkness, as reminders of your real light the shines on everyone. Amen.