

Each year I believe in Christmas lights. On my street, on most every street, when the sun has gone away, drawing the light in the sky over the horizon after it, suddenly little lights appear. Sparkling lights are everywhere, a message of love beamed to every passing one. On my street night after night more lights appear. My neighbors are so wonderful, my street is so wonderful, the world is so wonderful when little lights are glowing. How I love the feeling.

But I know before long another feeling will be mine. Where little lights once glowed there will be darkness, a darkness made darker still by my memories from these days. The coming of the night will bring an emptiness upon my street, and in my heart. The promise of the little lights will be broken.

Over and over again it happens with all the lights of my life. Summer sunlight so warm, so bright, turns into the red orange glow of fall. Then comes the fainter light, the distancing light of early December.

A friendship shines full of promise, full of warmth and love. But years and distance come between, and one day ^I ~~we~~ wonder whether ^{this year} to send a card to that one from long ago. ~~this year.~~ *I should send a card*

Or in the full sunlight of love, death comes an eclipse, sending the dark shadow over all the world.

I tire of the lights being lost, spring so quickly extinguished by fall. More and more of life the darkness of winter.

Once long ago a bright light shone. A light burst into a dark dark world. The people thought it a light from God. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. Yes the people thought he was the light that would not fade. The people were wrong.

John came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ^{we used} He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

He was not the light. John had to make that clear: Who are you the people asked. I am not the Messiah.

And they asked him. What then? Are you Elijah? He said. I am not. Are you the prophet? He answered, No.

Everything the people were looking for he was not. He was another brightness that would come and go and not endure. He was but for a time. He had to say no to everyone who wanted to make of him more than that.

What do you say about yourself? They asked him.

I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness; make straight the way of the Lord.

Like the little lights that glow on my street. They cry, Make ready the way of the Lord. They whisper. The true light that will never be extinguished is coming to your street, to your home, to your heart. They sparke the message: Don't settle for anything less that the true light, the eternal light.

How many are the lights in our life that are ours but for a moment. How many are the joys, so vivid and intense but gone as quickly as they were ours. How many are the hopes that we think will glow forever in our hearts but then we find suddenly one evening, the lights are no longer lit. The lights, the joys, the hopes, all point us to the true light that God has sent into our world.

We treasure our moments when the family is all together at the table, or gathered around the tree. We say this is what life is all about. We work so hard, sacrifice to prepare to make the moment special.

But if we ask John, is this what life is all about? John says, No.

As precious as this moment is, this moment is not the true joy, the lasting joy. ^{these joys are but for a time.} For ~~this joy will not last.~~ Before long you will have only a fading memory.

Fix your heart on the light that will not fade, the love that will not die.

Come to Bethlehem where the light of the love of God first shines through. Follow that light to Galilee, along dusty roads, climb on board the ship to cross the sea of Galilee. Witness the healing, hear the teaching, follow to Jerusalem to see that even in death this light will not be extinguished, but will shine anew once more in the early dawn.

The true light that enlightens everyone is coming into your world.

James, child of Mary, son of God, light in your life and mine.

Jesus is the light of the world whom God has sent. Jesus is the light that will shine in your darkness. Jesus is the one light that will not fail even when darkness is put and our streets are darkness.

we are.

The true light that enlightens everyone has come into your world to stay. Believe in him with all your heart.