

This Week's Sermon

LOOK TO THE SON!

Vicar Philip Casmer



Apostles

This Week

OUR MISSION

As God's disciples, we the men, women and children of Apostles are united in the preaching, teaching and sharing of God's Word in its truth and purity.

By God's grace, we will nurture believers and joyfully spread the Word of God in our community and throughout the world, all to His glory.

"Don't look right at it, you'll hurt your eyes!" Do you ever remember hearing anything like that in your life? I remember tracking a solar eclipse in grade school with our little eclipse cards and hearing Ms. Redick shouting those words to the kids who were looking through their cards at the sun. Not me of course. She would yell this out for good reason – looking directly at the sun could damage your eyes. It can ruin your vision because it is radiant. Ultraviolet light is radiating from the sun all the time, and it damages human tissue – especially our retinas. Now, listen to what the writer to the Hebrews says this morning about the Son (Read Heb 1:1-9). The beginning of the writer's letter boils down to what sounds like bad advice – Look to the Son. But it really is the best and most healthy advice out there, because as the Son, Jesus Radiates God's Glory and He Sustains You by His Word.

Christmas Day has finally arrived. We've been busy and rushed but now there is a moment of relaxation and joy. But how long can it last? Let's fast-forward a little bit and jump ahead a few weeks or months. In a week's time we might find leftover wrapping paper and our least favorite gifts lying around, maybe moldy Christmas leftovers in the fridge. In six month's time we'll probably be getting ready for summer vacation, or confirmation, completely back to the grind of life – work, school, home – maybe we'll even be worn out and tired. These can be symptoms of a problem that can happen even a week's time from now – we can allow the joy of Christmas and the glory of the Christ-child to fade from our lives.

We gladly rejoiced last night with the shepherds, Mary, Joseph, and the angels, and this morning we do the same.

God spoke to people long ago through prophecies and promises, but "in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son." The joy of the Savior is here! Isaiah says this about the Savior, "Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever." Our praise, in contrast, seldom does. As the season passes, and we pack away decorations, if we're not careful, we can slip the glory of the Savior in with the ornaments and the lights, tape up the boxes, and put it all out of sight and out of mind for another year. Maybe we even sigh to ourselves that going to church is done for the year...see you at Easter or next Christmas. When the sun goes away, winter rolls in—this week contained some of the shortest days of the year—when the Son goes away, enter the winter of sin. Without the Son there is no warmth and radiance in our lives.

Christmas Day has finally arrived.

There isn't anything to shine out from us – very little sharing of faith, maybe very little evidence of faith – only frustration with the same-old life visible on the outside. Our hearts aren't warmed by Christ's love, and "every day life" can fill in the place where "every day Christ" needs to be. When we pack away, or let fade the radiance of the Son, we block out the love that God shows.

But Christ's Son-shine is not seasonal. In the Christian's world it's spiritual summer all year round. Don't we often look forward to those warm summer

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

days – so warm you can feel the heat down to your bones – especially when it's -15° and the car won't start? The Christ-child shines that kind of wonderful warmth into your life by shining God's glory on you. The writer to the Hebrews says, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory." The glory that he shines on you and me is the undeserved love of God and the truth that he showed his love to you by making payment for our sins. In the words of verse nine, "He loved righteousness and hated wickedness." He lived perfectly – never forgot to share God's Word, never put God's love and glory away for a while, always sought comfort in God's Word. Verse three of our text says that he purified us.

With his blood, he purified us of sin – completely removed its stain by dying on a cross. Look to the Son, because the radiance of God's glory shines from the manger of Bethlehem all the way to the cross of Calvary. It radiates forgiveness for putting the joy of Christmas away and not letting it warm our hearts and lives.

Can you see that leaving Christ's radiance out of our lives isn't a small problem, like spilled milk or burnt Christmas ham? Our sin demanded the life of God's Son, and continuing to leave Christ's radiance out of our lives is detrimental – it hurts us because it knocks out our support. That's because Christ Sustains You by His Word.

Everyone knows that, in general, plants need sunlight to survive – it's their food, their support. The writer to the Hebrews uses a word here for "sustain" that means to "carry" or "hold up." These beams here are carrying the weight of our roof – holding it up over us. We wouldn't come into this building if the beams weren't here – we couldn't, it would fall to pieces. Blocking out the radiance of God's glory doesn't allow Christ to sustain us or "carry" us by his Word. When work becomes so mundane, or all the family leaves for home, or when sickness knocks at our door again and again, we can feel weighted down and sometimes try to carry that load ourselves. We might not take our burdens to God in prayer. We might not remember the joy God's Word reveals to us at Christmas – the Word made flesh – Jesus our Savior.

Why would we ever want to go without support in life? It doesn't make sense, but we do it. We

see Christmas as our time to be near the Word, but then we live in the building with no support for the rest of the year, hoping it won't crash down on us. To whom will we turn with heartache or sickness or spiritual trouble if we are not supported by Christ? Like hanging ornaments without a tree, we would have nothing and no one on whom to hang those sorrows and troubles – we would fall to pieces. We can focus on ourselves to get things done, but we will fail, we always do in the end. And the broken mess of life we leave only tumbles down to hell.

Rejoice – the manger of Bethlehem radiates glory, and is one of the most beautiful points in time because the Son sustains us. Verse three, in the original, calls him the exact "imprint" of God's nature. It is like a coin that is stamped, minted to be exactly like the die – Jesus is God. He's all-powerful; he is "heir of all things" and God created the universe through him. He's even more powerful than the angels – God's powerful messengers. And he holds everything

Why would we ever want to go without support in life?

up by his Word. All of that means, as Savior, his cleansing of our sins of "seasonal" zeal is done, because God does things right the first time. It also means that he promised you lasting joy that starts at Christmas and ends in eternal life.

As we celebrate Christmas and move on to another new year, we have every reason for year-round excitement and joy. Christ promises to support us in every situation, every day. I don't have to look to my weak self – I can go to his Word for comfort. Christ promises to carry us with his Word. In that Word of God our joy and excitement about our Savior are refreshed every time we read it – at home, on the road, at church. Our Savior died to make that joy mine and yours. By faith, he has been imprinted on our hearts. We can now be "imitators of God." That means we can take Christmas joy with us wherever we go because Christ rules in our hearts. We can take it and turn it loose on the

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

world, share it with friends, neighbors, and family. We can live it every day.

These are all things we can do. We just have to follow the advice of our epistle writer and Look

*Don't look to yourself and
knock down the support Christ
gives you in his Word.*

to the Son. He radiates God's glory, and He sustains you by His Word. Don't let the clouds of sin roll in and block out God's radiant love. Don't look to yourself and knock down the support Christ gives you in his Word. Look to the Son because he promises to support you and love you. We always say "Keep Christ in Christmas." God also says, "Keep the glory and comfort of Christmas all year long."

Philip Casmer is serving as vicar at Apostles Evangelical Lutheran Church in Billings, Montana. For contact information, please visit us at www.apostlesmt.net.

OUR MISSION

As God's disciples, we the men, women and children of Apostles are united in the preaching, teaching and sharing of God's Word in its truth and purity.

By God's grace, we will nurture believers and joyfully spread the Word of God in our community and throughout the world, all to His glory.

Apostles Evangelical Lutheran Church
3140 Broadwater Avenue
Billings, MT 59102

Mail To:

Visit us on the web at www.apostlesmt.net.