

FLICKERING LIGHTS

(Isaiah 42: 1-9)

Intro: I happened to wake up just at that moment.
-It was early Tuesday morning.
#December 11, 2007.
-Third day of the ice storm.
#We still had electricity at our house.
*Phone.
*Internet.
*TV.
+Had all gone out the previous day.
+I could see the wire lying in my driveway.
#But we still had heat and light.

I glanced at the clock next to my bed.
-The numbers glowed in the dark.
#4:20 A.M.
-Just at that moment.
#Clock went dark.
*But just for a moment.
#Then the numbers flickered back to life.
*But just for a moment.
#Then the clock went dark again.
*It stayed dark.
*It would remain dark for the next 5½ days.

-In that moment.
#I knew we had not escaped the power outages.
*That effected hundreds of thousands of people.
+During the ice storm.

#I got up.
*Found a flashlight.
*Got out the phone book.
*Called PSO.
+I had no trouble getting through at 4:30 A.M.
#But the flickering light on my clock radio.
*Had been a sign.
+Lights were about to go out.

I. God Promises Not To Put Out Our Flickering Lights.

A. Our Old Testament Lesson (Isaiah 42:1-9).

1. First of four "Servant Songs" in the book of Isaiah.
 - a. Isaiah 42:1-4.
 - b. Isaiah 49:1-6.
 - c. Isaiah 50:4-9.
 - d. Isaiah 52:13-53:12.
2. Servant has been identified as:
 - a. Individual.
 - Possibly Isaiah himself.
 - Possibly Cyrus.
 - #Persian king.
 - #Who liberated the Israelites.
 - *From their Babylonian captivity.
 - b. Nation of Israel.
 - Isaiah 41:8.
 - Isaiah 49:3.

B. We See These Words Speaking About Jesus.

1. Jesus.
 - a. God's chosen one.
 - b. Recipient of God's spirit.
2. That's what we celebrate today.
 - a. Baptism of Our Lord.
 - b. Why does Jesus need to be baptized?
 - He doesn't have any sin to be washed away.
 - He was baptized to fulfill all righteousness.
 - #Matthew 3:15.
 - #To commit himself to the task of making things right.
 - *Doing justice.
 - *Restoring relationships.
 - +Relationships broken by sin.
 - +Relationships between God and each of us.
 - c. Jesus' baptism.
 - Beginning of that ministry.
 - Sign Jesus was the one for this task.
 - #Chosen for this task.
 - #Anointed for this task.
 - #Baptized for this task.

3. There was no election or electioneering.
 - a. The servant does not:
 - Cry out.
 - Lift up his voice.
 - Make his voice heard in the street.
 - b. Last Labor Day weekend.
 - Pam and I were on our way back from eastern Canada.
 - Saturday evening.
 - #We were on the outskirts of Concord, New Hampshire.
 - *On our way to Brattleboro, Vermont.
 - +Where we had a motel reservation.
 - *Sun was beginning to set.
 - +But there was still some daylight.
 - #Pam was driving.
 - *I was navigating.
 - #I suggested that we take a detour into Concord.
 - *To see:
 - +State House.
 - +State Capitol.
 - =Oldest one in the country.
 - *We did.
 - #As I walked onto the State House grounds to take a picture.
 - *Bleachers had been erected.
 - *Sound system was being tested.
 - #When I saw a police officer.
 - *I asked him what was going on that evening.
 - #He said:
 - *"Nothing this evening."
 - *"But Hillary Clinton is coming tomorrow."
 - #That's the way of our political system.
 - *Candidates make their voices heard.
 - +In the streets.
 - +In television debates.
 - +In radio and TV sound bytes.
 - c. God's servant did not lift up his voice.
 - He was not running for office.
 - We had no vote.
 - Jesus.
 - #Not the people's choice.
 - #But God's choice.
 - d. It was God's voice that was heard at Jesus' baptism.
 - "This is my Son, my Beloved."
 - #Matthew 3:17.

- C. Promise of God's Servant.
 - 1. Our flickering lights will not go out.
 - a. "A bruised reed he will not break,
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench."
 - b. Isaiah 49:3.
 - 2. Who else can make that promise?
 - a. No mayor.
 - b. No utility executive.
 - c. No FEMA representative.
 - d. No president.
 - e. No presidential candidate.

II. Sometimes Our Lights Do Flicker.

- A. Each Of Us Experiences That In Our Own Way.
 - 1. Some of you have health issues.
 - a. Tests.
 - Waiting and wondering until the results come back.
 - b. Treatments.
 - Waiting and wondering to see if the treatments work.
 - c. Hospitalizations.
 - d. Surgery.
 - When our bodies get all bent out of shape.
 - e. Rehab.
 - Sometimes the lights flicker.
 - #Light of your life.
 - #Light of your faith.
 - 2. Some of you have lost a loved one.
 - a. Maybe it's divorce.
 - b. Maybe it's estrangement from a family member.
 - c. Maybe it's the death of a spouse.
 - You experience:
 - #Death of a loved one.
 - #Reminder of your own mortality.
 - Sometimes the lights flicker.
 - #Light of your life.
 - #Light of your faith.

3. Some of you have other:
 - a. Issues.
 - b. Struggles.
 - Family.
 - Finances.
 - Doubts.
 - Depression.
 - Property.
 - People.
 - #Bosses.
 - #Co-workers.
 - #Employees.
 - Sometimes the lights flicker.
 - #Light of your life.
 - #Light of your faith.
4. When the lights flicker.
 - a. You may be afraid that the lights will go out.
 - b. Darkness will overwhelm you.

B. God Promises That Our Lights Will Not Go Out.

1. "A bruised reed he will not break,
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench."
a. Isaiah 42:3.
2. I've been reading a book this week.
 - a. Christmas gift.
 - From my daughter-in-law's:
 - #Brother.
 - #Sister.
 - #Sister's fiancé.
 - b. More interesting than the book I told you about last week.
 - 23 Minutes in Hell.
 - c. Book is called Mandela.
 - About Nelson Mandela.
 - #Although he was not a religious leader.
 - *He was the Martin Luther King, Jr. of South Africa.
 - *Leading the civil rights movement in that country.
 - *Later he became president of South Africa.
 - #In the early 1960s.
 - *Nelson Mandela was:
 - +Accused of:
 - +Convicted of:
 - =High treason.
 - For his efforts to end apartheid in South Africa.
 - +Sentenced to life at hard labor.

- #When the pressures of:
 - *World opinion.
 - *Economic sanctions.
 - +Finally turned the tide against apartheid.
 - *Nelson Mandela was released.
- When Nelson Mandela walked out of Robben Island Prison.
 - #Alcatraz of South Africa.
 - #In 1990.
 - *After 27 years on that rock off of Cape Town, South Africa.
 - #He was smiling.
 - *His spirit.
 - #Not broken.
 - *His enthusiasm for the cause of equal rights.
 - #Not diminished.
 - #That light, that beacon of justice.
 - *Had not been quenched.
 - #By 27 years at hard labor.
 - #By feelings of:
 - =Anger.
 - =Bitterness.
 - =Revenge.
 - *Bill Clinton wrote the forward to the book.
 - #He had occasion to ask Nelson Mandela.
 - =How he could come out of that ordeal.
 - Without anger.
 - Without launching a crusade for revenge.
 - #Mandela answered him:
 - = "In 27 years I had lots of opportunities to be angry."
 - = "In 27 years I had lots of opportunities to let it go."

3. God sent Jesus.
 - a. God's Son.
 - b. God's Beloved.
 - c. God's chosen one.
 - To be the light of the world.
 - To be our light.
 - #When our lamps begin to flicker.
 - When Jesus was:
 - #Accused of:
 - #Convicted of:
 - *High treason.

- He was sentenced:
 - #Not to life at hard labor.
 - #But to death.
 - *On a cross.
 - *On a rocky promontory.
 - +Called Golgotha.
- On what we call Good Friday.
 - #Light flickered.
 - #Light went out.
 - *At least the light of Jesus' life.
 - *But not the light of:
 - +His love.
 - +His mercy.
 - +His forgiveness.
 - +His justice.
 - +His salvation.
- On Easter morning.
 - #There was a brilliant Son rise.
 - #Light was shining.
 - *Not flickering.
 - #Shining as it had at Jesus' baptism.
 - #Shining as it has at our baptism.
 - *Promising that our flickering lights will never go out.
 - *Not promising that we won't die.
 - +In baptism.
 - =We die to sin.
 - +Every day in remembrance of our baptism.
 - =We die to sin.
 - +Sooner or later this body is going to die.
 - =Light will never go out.
 - *Light of Christ.
 - *Light of the world.

4. We live in that light.
 - a. Glowing and growing in the light of the Lord.
 - b. Being lights.
 - To each other.
 - To our neighbors.
 - To the world.
 - c. Sometimes our lights grow weak and flicker.
 - Ever since the ice storm.
 - #I've been carrying a little flashlight in my coat pocket.
 - #Our parking lot lights are not yet back in service.
 - *If I'm here in the evening.
 - *I need a light to put my car key in the lock.

-On Thursday evening.
#After our Worship & Music meeting.
*I went to my car.
*I took out my car key.
*I took out my flashlight.
#Batteries had grown weak.
#Light wasn't very bright.
#But there was light.
*Enough light to help Barbara James.
#Step off the curb.
#Get safely into her car.
*Enough light for me.
#To find the key hole in my car.

Concl: Jesus Christ is the light of the world.
-In his light, we are lights.
#Sometimes weak.
#Sometimes flickering.

But in the light of:
-Jesus' baptism.
-Our baptism.
#We have God's promise.
*"A bent reed he will not break,
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench."

Let the light shine!

